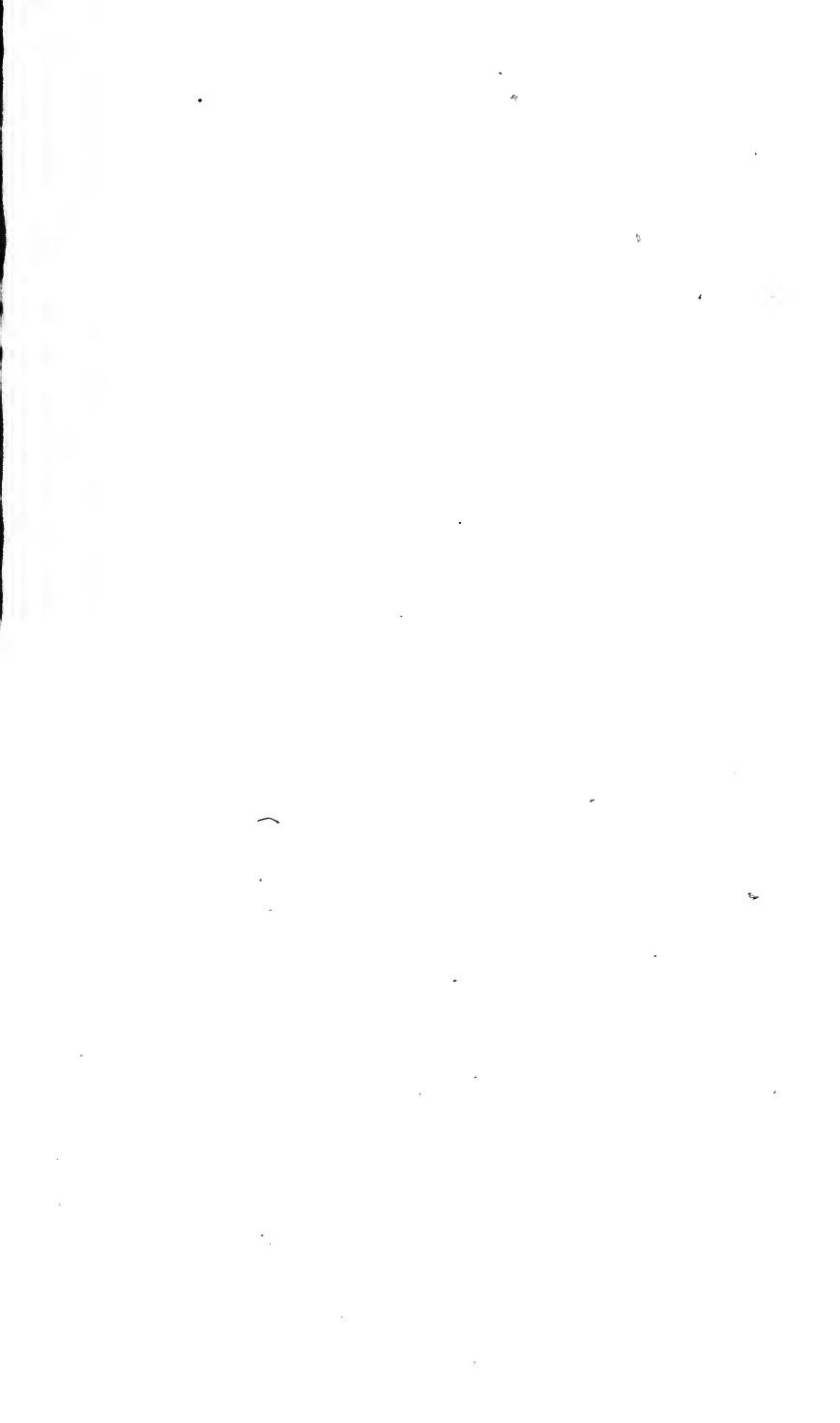


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LETTERS FROM HELL.

VOL. I.



LETTERS FROM HELL.

BY

M. ROWEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

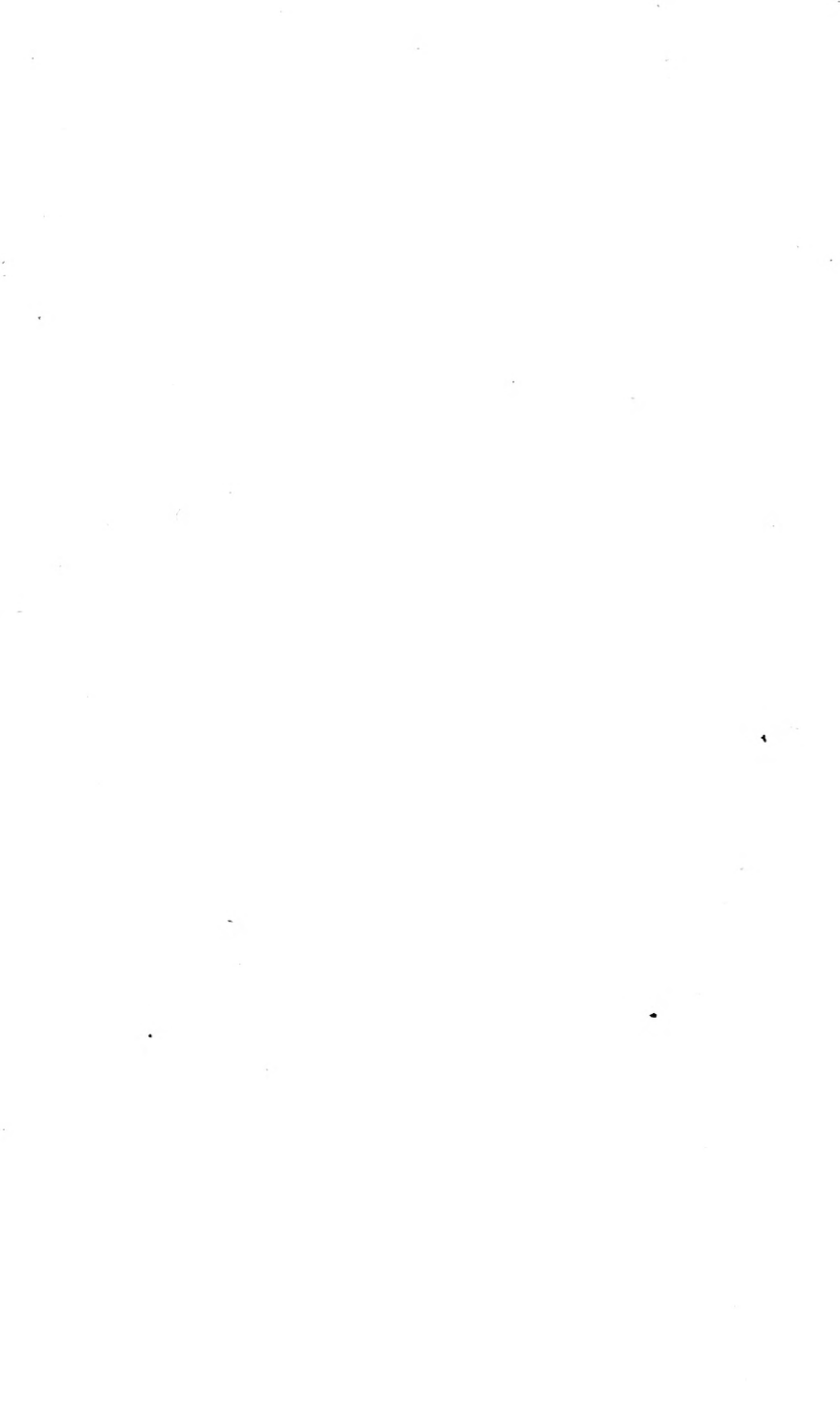
VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, 8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET;
AND COPENHAGEN.

1866.



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Which should not be overlooked.

Which should not be overlooked.

For ages there has been a widely extended belief in the existence of letters or messages from Heaven. Were they collected together, they would form by no means a diminutive code. Letters from Hell deserve equal credit; aye, even greater! For what can the saints in light have to write to us about? It is a different matter with the others. The rich man in the Gospel evidently felt an inward longing to communicate with those he had left in the world behind him.

Let everybody form his own opinion and judgment on the matter. I have only the simple duty to perform of attesting to the authenticity of these Letters. Should any one

entertain any doubt thereof, it will be the worse for him.

How these letters came into my possession is another question altogether. Rightly considered, it is an inquisitive question that does not deserve any answer. It is not for their sakes who attach excessive importance to it that I have had these letters printed.

POSTSCRIPT.

AND yet, to be perfectly candid, I must confess that it took me a long, a very long, time before I could determine on giving these Letters to the public.

The assurance that they might prove the salvation of many, and the perdition of a few, did not satisfy me. The case of these latter lay heavily on my mind. I am alluding now to the weak heads and the faint hearts.

To the first, alas! I have no counsel to give; but to the latter, God be praised, I know of one which may be safely depended

upon! It is the compassionate love of the Good Shepherd, in whose bosom perfect peace and safety may be found. Truly, not one soul shall be lost that only cries from the heart, "Lord save me; I perish!"

In firm reliance on this love of Jesus I now send forth the following Letters to the world. That they will cause restlessness and pain to many gives me no concern. On the contrary, it is just my very hope that many hearts may be touched, and be brought to inquire in fear and trembling:

"Ah! what shall we do?"

The answer is given, and is plain:

"Repent, and believe the Gospel."

Nov. 3, 1866.

LETTERS FROM HELL.



CHAPTER I.

I FELT myself to be dying. After a long period of unconsciousness, during which I had raved wildly under the influence of delirium, my senses returned once more. I was so weak that I could move neither hand nor foot ; while my eyelids, unable even to sustain their own weight, fell down again as soon as raised, and my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth.

They were standing round my bedside, and I could hear them whispering to one another, "Poor fellow, he does not suffer much !"

But I did suffer : more, far more, than mortal man can imagine ! For I plainly felt that I must die. The bare thought of dying had ever been a source of terror to me ; but the

dreadful reality of its meaning now burst on me in this hour for the first time. I say in this hour! And yet I lay in this state several days, though indeed they were but one endless hour of agony.

Where was my faith the while? Once I had had one; but that was long, long ago! In vain I tried to recall it, or at least some little portion of it. I had nothing to cling to in my fearful distress. I would have clutched at a straw, but my convulsive, groping hand found nothing to lay hold of—nothing!

Oh, the import of that terrible expression! I know of only one, which is more terrible—
“Too late!”

But there was something which I did not grasp at, did not seek after, that forced itself upon me with a marvellous clearness and fullness. It was the life I had led, and which in a few moments more would be closed. The good I had ever done was but little; the evil, oh how great! It stood out before my eyes like a picture. I had lived only for myself, and my own pleasure. Oh, terrible truth! I had been travelling along the broad road of death, not life's narrow path, from the very first. And now I was lying there, the victim of my own folly, utterly miserable; without hope of salvation. My sins stood arrayed

before me, dyed in blood ; but it was too late to repent. At that hour, indeed, I had no longer any conception of the meaning of the word repentance. I was the prey of despair.

Not yet fifty years old ; in possession of ample means, and to die so soon ! It seemed an impossibility ; and yet I knew that death was inevitable. It was stealing fast upon me. I felt it in the dusky twilight of my sick room ; I saw it in the faces of those who stood by my bedside ; I heard it in the deep silence that prevailed. It was a fearful scene ! And I, the chief actor in it, lay there ; all eyes bent on me ; all ears listening eagerly to catch my last gasp. The death chill was already curdling my blood ; it was as if I lay entombed alive.

One, one only source of comfort remained. " It will not be worse for you than for many others." Nothing, perhaps, that I could say, is better adapted to depict the utter wretchedness of my state, than this miserable ground of consolation.

But why dwell upon my last struggle ? No living soul can realize what my sufferings were. I had Hell within me—nay, Hell was still looming before me ! At length, I once more opened my eyes, and saw reflected on the faces of the bystanders the terror that was

visible on my own : one long, deep-drawn sigh, one convulsive shudder, and I was no more !

It was an indescribable feeling that I now experienced. Death was still quivering through my frame, but I felt myself released, freed, lightened. My consciousness, which for one moment had been extinguished, dawned once more the next. Where was I ? Thick clouds and mists, a desolate void, hemmed me in on all sides. It was not, however, literally dark ; for I could see, though no ray of light fell on my eyeballs. The first sensation I remember to have experienced was an icy chill ; it pierced me through and through, till I shuddered again, and my teeth chattered in my head. The second was a feeling of sickness, not of that description which one calls in the world heart-sickness. . . . Where was I ? . . . Involuntarily, the history of the rich man, who awoke to find himself in the place of torment, flashed through my mind. . . . Could I be that rich man ? . . . But of him it is said that he pined for one drop of cold water ! He must have been parched up, then, with heat, while I literally froze from cold, so that I gnashed my teeth. . . . Yes, there is an allusion to that, too, in another place ; it must be true then ; and the other, the devour-

ing flame, was true also—terribly true. I was soon to realize it!

Self-consciousness having returned, I perceived that I was naked. Perhaps that was why I felt so terribly cold. At first I thought I was the same—unchanged; but I was only the shadow of what I had been. The eye which saw, the teeth which gnashed, were not really existent, neither was any other part of my body. I was a shadow; stripped bare to the very core of my heart. No wonder, then, that I froze; no wonder that I felt myself naked; and yet with all this no feeling of shame came over me. But I did feel myself to be endlessly wretched. All that manliness in my nature of which I had formerly been so proud, was gone. In the world they call a human being of the most abject description, a beggar. Alas! I was much, much lower. While my funeral doubtless was being celebrated with due pomp and magnificence in the world above, I was making my entrance into Hell; naked, incomparably miserable. While the clergyman, maybe in unctuous words, was touching on my memory, and averring that I “was now beyond the reach of pain and suffering, . . . that Heaven was opened to me;” while, in a word, he was expending all the eulogiums on me which are

customary on such occasions, I was sitting in the midst of Hell's torments.

I went on. Was it the ground that I was standing on? It seemed like a swamp beneath my feet. A wondrous pavement! perhaps it was the good intentions with which Hell is said to be paved.

I went on : on through the fogs and darkness. Far, far off, perhaps it was a thousand miles, I espied a light. I instinctively turned my steps toward it. The fog seemed to lift little by little. Perhaps it was unreal, a mirage ; like those phantom castles and houses which emerged here and there out of the hazy atmosphere. Sometimes it appeared as if I went through one of these airy buildings in my blind haste. I saw ghost-like shapes, too ; first singly, now in troops. I trembled with fear, though I knew well enough that they were neither more nor less than beings like myself. All at once I found myself surrounded by a troop of them. I fled away in my terror, but only to fall into the hands of another band. I say hands, for they tore and pulled at me, though I did not feel their touch, as they sought in vain to hold me fast. Meantime they kept chattering and gibbering at each other. But, oh ! what voices ! it sounded in my ears like the faint, smothered creaking

of a rusty wheel. In my fright, I, too, uttered a cry, and heard the same abominable, doleful sound. I could not understand what they were saying, and yet I fancied I could distinguish the words, oft-times repeated, "Whence? . . . what news?" Oh! wretched man that I was, . . . what news could I tell? "Whence" was not the idea that engrossed my thoughts, but "Whither!"

Happily there were other poor wretches on the same road, and under similar circumstances to mine; so whilst the roaming bands were chasing them, I managed to escape. Breathless I dashed along (breathless, I mean, in soul, not in body), till I found a lonely spot, where I could rest awhile and collect my scattered thoughts. Alas, alas! what was there for me to collect, what to counsel about? Was I not lost for ever?

Overwhelmed with grief I sank down, and began to meditate on my wretched condition.

"So . . . I was in the kingdom of death . . . in Hell . . . in torments. Oh, that it should have come to this! Why had I halted between faith and disbelief?—between Heaven and Hell, till the last moment? . . . A few months, aye, a few days back, it would not, perhaps, have been too late to turn, and thus have avoided such a fearful fate. But I had

rushed into it blindly. . . . I had deserved it."

And I felt a certain bitter satisfaction at this last thought : for I detested myself with a burning, implacable hatred, even in the very midst of my self-love, which had been my second nature, and which I had brought with me undiminished in intensity. I could have torn myself into a thousand pieces, when I reflected on the many so-called good intentions which I had never carried out in the days of my life of sin. . . . Had I, then, helped to pave Hell with them ?

And there was no sorrow, no remorse mingled with it. I was grieved, crushed ; I cursed myself ; but I could feel no sorrow. Oh, if I could only do so ! . . . I know so well what it is ; but the power is gone for ever. And yet with all this hatred of myself, I felt the sincerest sympathy for myself . . . Oh, to have been able to shed only one tear ! The rich man in the Gospel sighed after one drop of water. . . . I sighed. . . . Oh ! . . . only for one single tear ! I had an inward feeling that if I could only weep, I should experience some relief. I writhed in agony ; I wasted my strength in convulsive endeavours to try and weep one tear. Just then a voice addressed me, and I started up. It was a young woman,

who was standing before me, holding an infant in her arms.

“O! leave off . . . it is all in vain!” she said softly and earnestly. And yet the expression of tenderness was more in her looks than in her voice. “I have tried myself so often, but all to no purpose. Here no drop of water is ever found . . . no! not even a tear-drop!”

I felt too plainly that she spoke the truth. Once I could have wept, but would not; now I wished to weep, but was unable. She sat down by my side, with her baby on her breast.

Indescribable was the expression of gentleness, mingled with pain, with which she regarded it. It seemed to be newly born, one that had barely seen the light of day.

After a short pause, she turned towards me; but it was no longer with me that she was engrossed, but with her child.

“It is not true,” she said; “the child lives. It is not dead! no! it is not dead!—though it does lie so still, with its eyes closed!”

I certainly thought it was dead; but as I did not wish to add to the poor creature’s grief, replied, “Yes! I think it is asleep; little children generally sleep so much.”

“Yes! . . . yes! . . . it sleeps;” and she began to rock it to and fro on her knee.

"They said I had murdered it," she resumed. . . . "My own child . . . Oh! was it not a mad story?—A mother to kill her own babe!" And she pressed it to her bosom with convulsive energy.

I could endure it no longer, so hurried away. And yet I experienced a certain degree of relief in occupying myself with another's grief than my own. But from the one I could fly away; from the other, flight was impossible.

Still on, ever in the direction of the distant light, as if some magic power attracted me. Well peopled was the land of darkness. Wondrous phantom shapes of endless variety, shadows of persons, shadows of things. There was much to terrify, much to cause pain; and yet gradually I began even to feel myself at home in this accursed state of negative existence.

Gradually I began to gather experience; but I will pass this part of my history by in silence. I will only narrate one circumstance, because it was the first opportunity that presented itself of enabling me to learn what the actual conditions of the place were.

I was standing outside one of those transparent phantom buildings I have alluded to. It was intended to represent a tavern. In the

world above such low places had been far beneath my notice ; now everything was on the same level. Apparently, mirth and merriment prevailed inside, accompanied with drinking, card-playing, and dice. It was a hideous mirth those phantom shapes indulged in. One of them, the landlord, I presume, presently beckoned to me to enter. Allured by the fire that blazed cheerily on the hearth, I foolishly obeyed his signal.

“ Cannot the man see the door ? ” he muttered, in a peevish tone.

Taken aback at his remark, I merely replied that I was freezing with cold.

“ Blockhead ! then why go about naked ? ” he exclaimed, with a demoniac grin. “ Only well-dressed persons enter here ! ”

I know not how it was, but my thoughts immediately reverted to my old warm dressing-gown, and in an instant I had it on me. And yet it did not cover my nakedness, nor did I feel any warmer than before. I therefore approached closer to the fire ; but it did not give out the smallest vestige of warmth, the flame might as well have been a painted representation.

Heartsick, I was beginning to turn away, when one of the guests called to me in a laughing tone, while another handed me a

flagon. A drinker I had never been; my tastes had been in another direction. But now I eagerly seized it, and placed it to my lips to quaff it down. Oh! that sensation of emptiness! that indescribable insipidity! A feeling of faintness came over me, as I sought to quench my burning thirst in gulping draughts of—pure nothingness. It must have been plainly depicted on my face, for they laughed and grinned at me, and said humorous things at my expense. I learnt to bear it. But there was something dreadful in their mirth that cut me to the heart: it was so hollow, so unnatural; not an atom of real merriment underlying it.

The carousing and gambling began again. I sat buried in my own dark thoughts, as I watched this strange scene. At length I summoned up courage to address the landlord.

“What sort of a house is this?” I asked timidly.

“It is mine,” was the reply.

Now this was no answer to my question; so, after a pause, I said again, “How has this house . . . all this . . . come to be?”

Some moments elapsed before he deigned to reply, during which he kept regarding me with a strange expression of countenance.

“How has it come to be? . . . Yah! I thought it, blockhead . . . that’s how it came to be!”

A new light burst on me. The house, then, was only a conception.

“Yes, comrade!” exclaimed one of the guests, turning round from the card-table, “here we all are in the land of enchantment, about which there are so many stories in the world. No sooner have we conceived the idea of anything, than it is ours. . . . Hurrah for jollity, I say!” and with a hideous grimace, that betokened anything else than merriment, he rattled the dice on the board.

It was all plain now. The house was unreal; the fire without warmth; the tapers without light; the cards, dice, and strong liquor,—in short, everything, down to the very patch on the landlord’s white apron, where the bunch of keys that dangled there had worn a hole, was all unreal.

There was one thing, however, that was real; the terrible instinct that compelled these shadowy beings to carry on in the spirit and in appearance what they had done in the flesh and in real earnest. The landlord to keep a debauched tavern; the guests to gamble, drink, and curse. Though bitter despair is in their hearts, they are impelled to assume an appearance of merriment. It was terrible. Oh!

more than terrible. I looked down at myself. This dress, then, I wore, which was insufficient to hide my nakedness, or give me warmth, was nothing but . . . a conjuring of my fancy. "Away! away!" a voice sounded within me. Oh! that I could fly away! . . . away from myself! . . . I could but leave my dressing gown behind me, and dash on once again in my nakedness, while a demoniac laughter, like the hoarse distant croaking of frogs, sounded in my ears.

How long my restless spirit rambled on, I cannot say. I experienced many things on my journey; delusions of course; but still I lived through much that was, not useful perhaps, but unfortunately a necessity. The light was my goal. It seemed to grow fainter. Was this, too, a delusion? No, there could be no doubt that it was fading; for now there was nothing but a faint dusky twilight; soon it would be pitchy dark.

I withdrew into myself out of reach of the well-peopled world of death. It is impossible for you, who live on the world above, to comprehend how far a person can withdraw into his own self.

I had sat thus for a long while, crouched up like a toad in a hole, when all at once my attention was aroused by hearing a deep sigh

close to me. I started to my feet, and looked nervously about. There was just sufficient light left to be able to discern the outline of a hideous form, crouching down but a few feet from me, and eyeing me with a stealthy glance. The features were marvellously contracted. A cord was tied round the neck, with one end of which its hands were incessantly playing. Now and then it put a hand up to its throat as if to loosen the noose, by running the forefinger round its neck underneath the cord. All the while it spoke not a word, but kept staring at me intently, as if the eyes would have started from their very sockets.

"The light is fading fast," I presently remarked, pointing in the direction where a faint glow was still visible; "'t will soon be dark, I suppose."

"Yes," it answered, in a thick tone; "The night is at hand!"

"How long will it last?" I inquired.

"How long?—Maybe a couple of hours, maybe centuries! Of its duration none can form any idea; but long it always is," added the form, with a terrible groan.

"But surely the day will come back once more?"

"Yes; if you call that day, which on earth is named twilight. . . . Lighter than that it

never is here.—I have a strong suspicion that there is no such thing as day. But, after all, what does it matter? But you are a stranger here, surely?”

It was my turn to sigh now, as I answered, “Yes! I died but a short while back!”

“A natural death?” it inquired earnestly.

“Yes! of course!”

My answer did not seem to please the shade, for it made fearful grimaces, and was silent for a long time, while, for my part, I felt no desire to continue the conversation. But presently it began again :

“It is so dreadful to go about with one’s life in one’s own hands, as I am doing. Never a moment’s rest; always on the move. All are bent on taking away my life. You too, you would take it. I can see it in your eyes; but as yet you are too bewildered to entertain any evil purpose. Do you see this rope? It all depends on no one getting hold of the end of it; and, therefore, I never let it go out of my hand. Oh! if any one did get hold of it. Presto! I should be swung up in a twinkling!”

After a long pause, the spirit continued : “Of course it is all illusion on my part, and sheer nonsense. I know that well enough, when I am myself. No one can take away

my life, for the good reason that no one can take what does not exist. But I cannot help it. When this childish nervousness comes over me, I am forced to run as if I had a thousand lives to lose, and Hell were full of murderers."

With a deep sigh, the ghost finished his tale, and loosening the cord round his neck, fell into a deep reverie.

Thus we sat together for a while. But presently, by accident, I chanced to move my arm in the direction of my unfortunate comrade. Thinking, probably, that I was about to seize hold of the end of the rope, he vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

CHAPTER II.

I REMAINED sitting where I was. Soon the darkness quite enveloped me. Soon, do I say? Fool! how know I whether the time was long or short? All I do know is that it fell with an ever-increasing speed and intensity, till, at last, it was pitchy dark. I say now *at last*; before, I said *soon*. Ah! how little capable am I to judge of time.

But what darkness it was! Mortals can form no idea of it. In the world one is used to say, "the darkness is so thick one can almost feel it, or cut it with a knife." Alas! this comparison does not suffice for Hell. There the darkness is so thick and intense that it crushes one down with a weight of hundreds of pounds. It leaves no space to stir in. It hems one in on all sides with an oppressive, though not really tangible, weight. Now I began to realize the meaning of those words, "outermost darkness." Anything more extreme cannot be imagined.

And there I sat, crouched down in the very smallest space, shuddering from cold and fright, —I, who but a little while ago had the whole world before me, and had rejoiced in my strength. I said from cold, but within me was a consuming fire. "Their fire is not quenched; their worm dieth not!" Oh, terrible truth!

The torture of Hell consists in these very opposites. In external cold, howling and gnashing of teeth; and a consuming fire within; a drought compared with which the drought of Sahara must be a cooling refreshment. And then that terror—that nervous feeling! It was one of the first experiences I gathered, and I gathered it unaided. As darkness draws on, the dread of death falls on all the denizens of Hell; and as the former increases in intensity, so does the other, till at last one is ready to expire from sheer fright.

Expire! . . . An illusion again! No death-struggle is there here, 'tis but a shadowy repetition of it. Oh, the groans and howlings the lost soul then ejaculates! The moans of despair! but they are never heard!

Have you ever known what it is to toss the whole livelong night on your bed, racked with bitter remorse, sad reminiscences, or even with mere sorrow and anxiety for the

future? Know, then, that that is joy supreme compared to what we undergo. And at length you become weary of reproaching yourself. Nature asserted her sway, and, happy mortal, you fell into a refreshing sleep. You forgot all your misery; the acuter your suffering, the deeper was your slumber; and, when you awoke, a new and blessed day had arisen over you, with fresh grace, fresh hopes!

Oh, happy, thrice happy! Yes! such do I rightly term you, whatever be your suffering; however low or miserable your condition in the world. For reflect! The most miserable being on the face of the earth is happy indeed compared with one of us, if he would only take his misfortune at its real value. Yes! wonderful as it may sound, on earth, though it is a world of realities, unhappiness is, to a great extent, imaginary; but here in Hell, though a land of shades and phantoms, it is awfully real. In the world it depends so much on the way in which a man meets his misfortunes. Here there is only one way of meeting them, the stern, inflexible way of necessity. One does not meet them after all; they are imposed.

Oh, for one moment's slumber, one moment's oblivion! What joy! what blessedness!

Alas! I do but increase my torments. My tears stream down as I write, but they are not of that description that can stain the paper. They fall like drops of molten lead on my soul. Tears did I say? Pooh! believe it not, it was but a figure of speech!

There I sat that long, endless night, death-night I should call it—in distinction to the dark and fearful nights I have passed on earth—for a deathlike chill shuddered through me; while within a fire burned, a fire that can never be quenched. And it had a twofold flame. For the sins I had committed, and the desires I had conceived, glowed hot and fierce within. Which was the most agonizing of the two I am unable to say; only this I know, that they raged as it were by turns, and my thoughts, like a breath of wind, fanned them into flame.

My sins! Of what avail to speak of them now? And yet I must. My sinful life is ended. It lies before me in fearful distinctness, not only as regards its whole career, but in its very minutest parts. That I am, or rather was, a sinner, has not forced itself upon me now for the first time. I have always known it; but with a cunning and address, betokening not so much any adroitness on my side as on the Devil's, I knew how to keep the convic-

tion down, if not quite in subjection, as long as I was alive. I was unable to destroy it entirely, but kept it chained so close a prisoner, that to all intents and purposes it might have been reckoned among the dead; and if ever its voice would make itself heard, it was but as a gentle whisper, to which it was needless to give any heed.

But I could even do more. By degrees I learnt how to cast my sins behind me, and to forget them as completely as if they had never existed.

But now! Oh! now!

This obliviousness was but a juggling devilish trick. They all stand in array before me; not one is wanting! On the contrary, there are many more than ever I would acknowledge in the world. There were a thousand things which I counted as nothing, but which now rise up against me, and condemn me. I can see myself with a clearness, to which I was a stranger before. My whole life is reflected in a mirror, in all its particular and separate parts. A perfect sketch of it traced in the finest and most delicate outline lies before me, no line so faint, no point so diminutive, but that it catches my eye. My tortured soul roams hither and thither, writhing and twisting if haply it can find a place,

however small, where to rest awhile, if only for one instant. But it is in vain !

And yet I have never been what the world would call a bad man. No, no ; far from it. Thoroughly selfish, yet not naturally devoid of sympathy ; of strong appetites, yet not without refined ideas ; of violent passions, but far too well bred to commit myself in any way. Affable, courteous, ready to assist ; on the whole, goodhearted, as long as my passions did not blind me ; I was not only a general favourite, but I may say was universally esteemed. In short, I was a man of the world. And yet it was far from my intention to let the world use me ; on the contrary, it was my firm determination to make use of it. Without faith, without any other object in view save that of the passing hour, I lived for enjoyment alone. Without faith did I say ? But that is not quite correct. For, as a child, I possessed an inward, lively faith, but when I came out into the world it could not survive. In the mad career of youth it faded away. At a certain period of my life, indeed, it seemed as if it were about to bud forth again. But when everything else suffered shipwreck, it too was sucked down in the whirl. And yet I could never quite eradicate it. Who knows but that I should have done so had I been

able? Up to my very death, the feeling that I still had somewhat of the religion of childhood lingering within me remained.

I lived, breathed only in my passions. Do you care to know what they were? They were more numerous than I can mention; but the chief of them were, a good table, high play, beautiful women, and piquant adventures.

Oh, how they burn! True, they burnt in the world; but they caused me no pain, or rather it was an exquisite, a voluptuous pain. But now . . . ?

If you have any notion of what the dry drought is, you might possibly be able to form a faint idea of my sufferings.

I feel a consuming drought within. I suffer under an incessant internal burning. To be burnt, indeed, at the stake would be pleasure compared to this, because there would be an end to it. But here there is no end! Can you form any idea about it now? It is not, it is true, always equally intense, for that would be against nature. Yet it is but a poor consolation; it is always greater than it is possible to describe.

But let me quit the sufferings I underwent that first night. Strange that I should blush to tell what I have now to narrate. There is a peculiar remorse attached to it, a remorse

which I have to myself alone; but doubtless most of those in Hell would say the same of themselves; but it is a remorse which has never abandoned me a single instant since I have raised my eyes in torment. A whole history is attached to it, but one of those histories that penetrate deeper into the soul than any one would suppose.

I celebrated the anniversary of my thirty-first birthday in a little country inn in a foreign land. I was returning home after an absence of rather more than a year. I had been to the East—in the most unhappy frame of mind it is possible to conceive, broken down with grief and sorrow, and mourning for the loss of a blighted love. We had set out three in number; but two returned; and now we were but a two days' journey from home, when a tremendous storm compelled us to seek shelter in this wretched inn.

But strange things occur in the world! Here, in this very inn, I was destined to meet with the first object that could arouse a feeling of sympathy within me for many months past. It was a ragged boy of some eight or nine years old. His mother, it seemed, had belonged to some circus troupe, and had recently drowned herself in a neighbouring swamp. He was a dirty, ill-mannered, untractable

child, and would not be consoled. He had loved tenderly, passionately, to the exclusion of every other object save one. Had not I? He had lost everything that bound him to earth. So had I! But this was not all. Line by line the child's being spoke to my dulled senses in a marvellous way.

His passionateness; his reserved, timid disposition; yes, even his ungovernable temper, touched a chord in my own heart. It seemed to me that I should have acted just as he did. And yet for all his rags and filth he was a handsome boy. His dark tearful eyes had an expression about them that went straight to the heart; and his thick tangled masses of hair enveloped a face which, without possessing any regular features, was yet in a high degree attractive. His was one of the boyish faces Murillo would have loved to paint. What more need I add, except that the first glance at him made my heart yearn towards him? No one else would have him; so I took him. But had I been obliged to have paid dearly for him, he should not have escaped me.

His mother had been known by the name of Rosalinda: a name, doubtless, assumed in the circus. But the boy knew of none other name. Nothing was found on her person, not a relic

that could throw any light upon the matter. Had any such ever existed it must have been lost with the wretched woman under the dark waters of the morass. In fact the only thing to which any hope of discovering a clue was attached was a mark indelibly tattooed on the boy's right arm. It resembled a swan, and some unintelligible hieroglyphics were attached to it. The boy's name was Martin. He spoke a mixed, impure language of which my own native tongue formed but a minor part.

I took the boy, then, with me; but not without being obliged to use force.

We had left home three in number; and three of us returned. But, O God! what an exchange!

He grew up under my eye, a child without extraction, without a name. No clue as to his origin was ever discovered, but still the lad felt convinced, and the conviction strengthened with his years, that the mark on his right arm would some day or other be the means of clearing up the mystery of his birth.

He had no small ideas of himself. I never allowed him out of my sight. People said I had got a plaything in the pretty child, and perhaps there was some truth in the remark. For the animal nature in him was strong, and

developed itself with astounding precocity, at the expense in a great degree of his moral nature.

Possessed of strong instincts and passions, with a remarkable amount of self-will about him, he was by no means a manageable boy. But it afforded me amusement to irritate and excite them, at one time by letting them have free play ; and again, at another, by keeping a tight check upon them. But he was more than a plaything to me ; my heart had, indeed, turned towards him, had, in a word, adopted him for its own. Possibly the cause of this was that I hoped to find an exact counterpart of myself in him ; or, possibly, it was a mere whim of mine that had brought about this strange connection ; one thing, however, was certain, I came to love him : and those persons I have loved in the world, besides myself, might very easily be counted up.

And he returned my affection with a burning, passionate, ungovernable love. If I exasperated him merely to gratify myself, and ended by placing my foot on his neck, when he had defied me in the fiercest terms, he would at last humble himself so deeply, and twine himself round my very knees, so that I have actually had to drag him along through the very dust. At such moments as these he

would willingly have submitted to be trodden under foot, or to suffer any indignity at my hands, provided I would only assure him of my forgiveness, and again take him into favour. But I did not treat him thus: I neither trod him under foot, neither did I ill-treat him in any way. And yet, though the harshest treatment would never have brought a tear to his eye, he would often hang round me, dissolved in tears, as the only being on earth who cared for him. And then the tears would rise up to my own eyes, and we would be friends again. Our attachment towards each other, instead of becoming weakened thereby, actually flourished the more vigorously. Thus matters went on between us; at one time the bitterest, wildest passion; at another, the tenderest, most endearing love, till at last it flashed on me that he was a boy no longer. Soon he grew up into a man like myself, with strong passions, with great self-love.

It was an exceptional case on both sides for us to love each other.

A scene at length occurred between us, worse than any of the former ones. He had offered me defiance on a matter which I could not brook, and I had as good as spurned him from me. How dared the fellow presume to be my rival?

He had left me, smarting from the treatment he had received, but unyielding, breathing out threats that he would never return. And he kept his word. At a subsequent period I received a letter from him, in which he gave me the choice either of making way for him or of losing him for ever, coupled with a threat that he would engage himself in the service of some semi-barbarous state. I made no reply to his *ultimatum*; it was so plainly his duty to humble himself and to give way to me. Time sped swiftly by, and I began really to think that I had lost him. If I were to say I suffered no uneasiness at the thought, I should be giving utterance to a falsehood. Yes, I did feel remorse, anguish, sorrow, for I loved him still; and my heart whispered to me that if he went to ruin I should be his destroyer.

Then I fell ill. It was the first illness I had ever undergone, and it was also my last. On my sick-bed, contrary to all expectations, I received another letter from him. Its meaning was obscure, but the spirit that breathed through it was plain enough. I was more than astounded. He actually acknowledged himself to be in error, and was tractable, mild, and gentle in his expressions, as I had never known him to be before. He prayed for an

interview ; he would return "as the lost, repentant son. He had things to communicate which must needs do away with all dissension between us. A higher power had judged between us." He also alluded to *her* in his letter. But his style was so abrupt and confused that it was impossible to decide whether the explanation he had to offer referred to himself or to her.

But he never received any answer to this letter either. I was already too weak to write, and I could not trust any one else to do it for me. Fool that I was, I fondly hoped to be myself again in a day or two.

What explanations had he to offer ? What was the cause of this wonderful change in him ? Was it himself or her he referred to ?

These questions tortured me till the time when I drew my last breath. Perhaps they hastened my end. They followed me to Hell, and torment me more than aught else ; for other matters at times slip out of my thoughts ; but this question, "What did he want with me?" never leaves me. It burns like a fire-brand on my soul. And that it resolved itself into many other such questions as these : "Did it refer to him or to her ? How had it fared with him, spurned by the only being who had ever shown him any love ? Was I the cause

of his ruin ?" did not make the pain one whit the less.

Oh, woe, woe ! These questions are a Hell in themselves.

CHAPTER III.

How long I sat buried as it were in myself and darkness, how long this night of perdition lasted, I cannot say. Even if there could be any mention of time in Hell, there is naught whereby to measure it. It may have been years, or it may only have been hours. But one thing is certain, I lived over again that night the whole of my wretched earthly career.

Can you realize my meaning?

At last the dawn began to re-appear, but so slowly I cannot describe it. Little by little the darkness became less dense; a faint light glimmered through it; imperceptibly it increased in brightness, till at length I was able to discern the objects around. This time of expectation, if I may so term it, was the least painful I have yet experienced in Hell; for a shadow of oblivion fell on me while I was craving for the returning light. And what blessing greater than oblivion here? I said light! But, alas, it is never light here! Neither

is there such a thing as oblivion ! It was but a fond imagination.

But it cheered me up, and put fresh power into me. Then I gathered myself up and set off again in the direction of the rising dawn. How long, and how far I went, has nothing to do with it ; suffice it to say, I was soon enough in the middle of Hell's misery, and had found my proper place. Then again might I rest myself awhile. Rest ! Once for all I must beg you not to be misled by such foolish expressions, which the force of old habit makes me employ. For of course there can be no such thing really as rest here.

It is wonderful how quickly I found out my proper position ; how quickly I adapted myself to the conditions of the place. Instinctively I did as the others did, acting all the while in accordance with my own peculiar individuality. Thus I contributed my part to make Hell a shadowy and distorted image of the world above. I could not have acted otherwise than I did, even had I felt convinced that it was to my infamy and disgrace.

For every one feels an irresistible impulse to carry out the same sinful predilections he had in the world. And every one can obtain what he desires. He has only to conceive the idea, and lo ! he is in possession of the reality.

Thus passions and lusts are as prevalent here as ever they were in the world, only far more frightful.

In the world their hideousness was concealed under a fair outside covering of the flesh; but here they are arrayed like skeletons, bidding defiance to all nature in their carnal lusts, desiring everything they ever have desired, but in reality attaining nothing except to grin at each other. All here is hollow and empty, devoid of truthfulness and reality, incapable of affording satisfaction. It is just in this very thing our torture consists: in the compulsion to surround ourselves with this essence of vanity; in the obligation to devote ourselves to this empty unreality. And, however lively our convictions may be that all is void, all is vain; however great the repugnance we feel, we must bow and bend ourselves to it; we are forced without cessation to strive to become what we have been before.

If a number of spirits unite in the wish, "Here shall be a town," it is accomplished. Every one co-operates in the work, according to the impulses of his individual entity, and the town is built.

Or is it a church they desire, or a theatre, or a promenade; a forest, or a lake; or a mountain range, the wish is realized at once.

And not only does each individual see what his own vanity has produced, but it is patent to every one else. And yet they are naught but shadows altogether. Nay, even this expression has too much reality—they are mere imaginations.

There is never any lack of subservient spirits to place all this phantom-work upon the stage.

If any one wishes to build himself a palace and keep a magnificent establishment, he can have the choice amongst unfaithful stewards, thievish butlers, and deceitful servants in abundance. It might be supposed that there would be found but few willing to undertake such subordinate positions; such, however, is not the case; habits brought down from the world above decide the matter.

Or should any one have a desire to raise an army (provided, of course, that he has commanded one previously, for without reputation the attempt would be a signal failure), he will find numbers of braggadocios and bloodthirsty vagabonds, who are fit for nothing else. Or should his tastes lie in the direction of a harem, he will find an incredible number of obliging females, both with and without the title of lost women. And so on to infinity.

After these explanatory remarks you will

not be surprised to hear that I still reside as formerly at my tasteful villa on the banks of —, that I keep up a fine establishment, and live at a high rate.

As of old, I am wedded to society, with all its visible and secret charms. Indeed, few persons have had such an intimate acquaintance with this source of enjoyment as myself, or have made the use of it I have done. But now—I do not say pity me, my friend, for your sympathy could do me no good—but I only say you have here the misery of Hell pourtrayed in these few words, “I will take my fill of pleasure, I will revel in enjoyment as of old, and yet experience no sense of pleasure, no feeling of enjoyment.” Is it not folly? But such, such alas, is the case!

I have found many acquaintances, and a fair number of friends, but no greetings have passed between us yet. I have not yet forgotten how fine the feeling of the world is. It would be wrong to lay the blame on the poor families; besides, it could give them no pleasure.

However great saints those who have departed may be accounted in the world above, they will not find the pains of Hell to be less real.

Dare I venture upon a description of Hell? Is it capable of being described? I almost

doubt it; but still I will do my best to give you a sketch.

Of course Hell has its geography. "What its extent?" No one can say. Infinity is the only answer that can be given. If one could take earth, sun, moon, and all the planets together, they would not nearly fill Hell. Yet, what am I saying? Space here is as little capable of measurement as time.

"And Hell's boundaries?"

On one side only can there be said to be a boundary, and that at an immense distance off, even to a spirit's conception. Whether any one has ever yet actually reached it, I cannot say; I only know that a boundary does exist. On every other side none has ever been discovered.

In the direction of the glimmering light there is a tremendous abyss, separating Paradise from the place of torment.

On yonder side, therefore, is Paradise, and it is thence that the light issues. At stated, and doubtless at regular intervals, the gloom rises up from it; and as it increases in intensity, the light gradually wanes, till total darkness sets in. This is our night! Then the abyss becomes as it were a burning mass, but the flames give no light. It is Satan's corner, the abode of the damned. It makes me shudder to speak of it.

After a while the gloom again sinks down little by little, and the light becomes once more apparent, growing stronger and brighter, till it has reached its culminating point in a hazy, but wondrously soft twilight. Then suddenly the misty shroud bursts asunder, and the light streams forth in overwhelming streams. Hell is at first blinded with the glare, and stricken to the heart, as it presently beholds, on yonder side the pit, Paradise unfolding itself in all its wondrous splendour and inconceivable majesty to the vision of the damned. Nay, not so! We are not yet damned, but rather let me say, to the languishing gaze of the tormented. And not only can one see into Paradise (for nothing is hidden), but the blessed spirits of the dear departed ones also.

I have not yet experienced what I have now forced myself to describe; but I am proceeding with the growing dawn to meet that hour—that hour of blessedness or of woe.

How long the light is increasing, how long it is waning, I have as little idea as I have of the length of our night. Perhaps it is measured by hours, perhaps by years; but the bright effulgence of Paradise lasts but a fleeting moment, though to many its duration may be bitterly long. Shall I meet that hour with joy or dread?

A dark, slimy river winds its way through-

out the whole extent of Hell. You think, perhaps, of Lethe. Alas! no, my friend; it is no such Lethe, a draught from whose waters can produce oblivion. Lethe is but a fable, while this is a hideous reality. It has its source in the world above; all the lies and wickedness of earth float down on its current. Maybe that is why its water is so black and slimy: often it resembles congealed blood. At irregular intervals it swells and overflows its banks, when some monstrous falsehood or crime is hatched in the world above; then its waters pour over its banks, leaving behind them a putrid mass of pestiferous mud. The stench is scarcely bearable; but we, hardy spirits that we are, can bear all things!

To the best of my recollection, I have already alluded to the suffocating nausea we suffer from continually. It is not surprising.

All the vanity of the world descends direct to Hell, and forms an atmosphere around us. The greater the amount, the thicker the atmosphere, and the more oppressive the feeling of nausea. If one could only vomit! But that is impossible. Otherwise, one would vomit up the world, which fills one to repletion; one would vomit up one's own self, and thus the torments of Hell would come to an end. You see I am a logician still. Alas, God help me!

Sometimes we have rain and snow ! It is when follies and vanities accumulate to a more than ordinary degree in the world, (and it can endure a large amount of them ; it is its nature,) and it can bear no more ; then the surplus falls down into Hell, and, according to an old custom, it is said to rain or snow.

Not only do events observe a certain chronological, but also a political order here. Neither are the sympathies quite excluded. Generations dwell here as it were in layers or strata ; those spirits that belong to the same age usually herding together. But still, race, and the development of civilization, make themselves apparent even here. The last arrivals naturally occupy the outermost places, but as fresh crowds are ever pressing on, the first-comers draw back. Of course, there are many exceptions to these rules. Those who have followed out the same lines of thought, and the same pursuits, naturally flock together here, though they may have belonged to different races of people, and to periods widely remote.

Frequently, also, these persons compose a whole by themselves, who had formed an exclusive social circle in the world above, or belonged to certain definite periods. Thus, there is a "City of Unrighteousness," called also the

“City of Politicians;” a “Town of the Holy Inquisition;” a “City of the Jews;” of “the Mormons,” “Sodomites,” “Pre-Noachians,” &c. Hell thus, in a great measure, assumes the appearance of a colonized land. Inclination and caprice, I should add, play as great a part here as in the world above.

Gradually I have learnt to know the laws that prevail here. They are as simple as they are natural. Desire and remorse keep the whole in motion. I was nearly substituting repentance, but that is a word of whose meaning we know nothing. Our torment is of a twofold nature, but the result is only one. Some have to follow after the same lusts and desires which they followed on earth, and yet never be satisfied; or practise the same evil deeds as of old, but with ineffable disgust and aversion to themselves.

The covetous man, for instance, can think of nothing but his gold still; the unclean man only of his uncleanness; the gluttonous man only of his appetite; the murderer only of his foul bloody deed. Others, again, are constrained to follow after those very things which they neglected in the world, and are tormented with a longing to make good and to restore, knowing all the while that it is in vain. The unrighteous man thinks only of

repairing his unrighteous deeds; the unmerciful only of exercising mercy; the unnatural mother's thoughts are now centred on her poor children; while the self-murderer's sole anxiety is now to save his life.

All are compelled either to do as they did on earth, but ought not to have done; to aim after those things that once were their aim, but unlawfully so. Or inversely, to do those things they left undone on earth, but ought to have performed; or to follow after those which they wilfully omitted, but ought to have followed after.

But the sufferings of Hell must not be regarded in the light of a punishment. Punishment is yet impending; first comes the Judgment. No, it is but the direct consequence of our life on earth. Ye that are still alive, think, I pray you, on these things. Everything, be it ever so small, has consequences attached to it, which extend far, far beyond the boundaries of an earthly life into the very depths of Hell: of the kingdom of Heaven I can say nothing. If then the simple consequences are so fearful, what must the punishment itself be?

The law then, the fearful fundamental law that obtains in Hell, is, that we are not tormented, but that we torment ourselves. But

notice the point from which everything issues, and on which finally everything depends, namely, whether we have lived in the faith of God's Son, who once gave Himself for us. Our iniquities weigh down the scale in proportion as they have stood in the way of our faith, or have testified against it. Do not be surprised that I name the name of God. Alas, He is still our God! And in the same way I name the name of God's Son. We know that God has a Son, who once came into the world to save sinners, and that He loved the lost sheep unto death, even the death of the cross. But, for all that, we know naught of salvation, or redemption; all is forgotten, even to the Saviour's very name. We often waste our strength in agonizing endeavours to recall, if it were only a particle of it. But all in vain; not even His name. Oh, if we could only remember that name, and be able to pronounce it, then we should be saved indeed! I do not doubt it for an instant. But woe, woe! It is too late!

On the whole, what I have forgotten is enormous. I might well say I have forgotten everything except myself. Yes, I speak correctly, for I have not forgotten myself. On the contrary, I remember everything connected with my life with a degree of precision

as painful as it is wonderful. But what was once, as it were, attached to my being has disappeared. Intelligence, accomplishments, talents, with all the other ornaments of Mammon and the flesh, have disappeared together. It is not so wonderful then that this feeling of nakedness is so vividly impressed on me.

Yes, only myself remains. And when I inquire of what this individuality of mine consists, I find only burning remorse that can never be quenched ; ardent desires that can never be satisfied ; a foolish longing after what is lost, and can never be found ; an immeasurable amount of recollections, small and great, which are bitter and painful in the mass.

There you have me exactly as I am, O God, my God, in the torments of Hell !

CHAPTER IV.

I WAS not brought up under the most happy conditions. My parents were an ill-matched, ill-assorted pair. Indeed, it was a very general remark among people, "that it was a wonder they ever could have married." My father was a plain, simple-minded man, retiring and unpretentious in his manner. He was the head of a very renowned mercantile and manufacturing firm ; but, for all this, to outward appearance, he seemed a very unimportant personage.

As far back as I can remember, my mother, who was the most important of the two in my eyes, was, in every sense of the word, a lady. She was strikingly beautiful, and retained her good looks for a very long time. Possibly the reason of this was that she had been a stranger to any great passions. Some people, indeed, called her cold and apathetic, and there was doubtless some truth in the remark ; but they would have committed a great error had they

said she had no will of her own, or was devoid of energy. For though the former never certainly showed itself in any repulsive manner, I do not believe it had ever been bent. Who, indeed, could have bent it, when I her only, her darling child, was powerless to do so. And she was just as clever as she was decided and firm.

She was universally admired ; I cannot say beloved. Perhaps no one really loved her but myself ! Did I love my mother ? If I were to give a truthful answer to this question, I should have to own that I too admired her more than I loved her. And well did she deserve this admiration. Much as I have seen of the world, I have never met with any other woman who so entirely came up to my ideas of what a lady ought to be. She was perfection realized ; perfect in beauty ; perfect in manner, carriage, and bearing ; perfect in dress ; perfect in all the customs of the world ; perfect in the due discharge of her duties ; and perfect in her conduct, in Christian piety and devotion.

In all things she was a model for imitation ; free from spot or stain. She never gave offence ; never said, or did, or sanctioned anything that was not right.

In fine, I might say that my mother was

perfect even to the very minutest fold of her dress. And she enjoyed this reputation to a ripe old age; and even then her pretty looks were loth to leave her.

When I look back, I can see her, as I can see everything else, far more clearly than I could then. It is no longer a secret to me that she was greatly influenced by the world. The world was her pattern, and this was why she had developed herself to such perfection.

I do not mean to imply by this that she **was** anyways deficient in her appreciation of religion, or of her higher duties. On the contrary, I venture to say few persons have kept God's commandments so closely before their eyes.

She honoured the clergy; the church was, as it were, a second home to her; no one ever left her without being satisfied one way or another. Duty and propriety walked hand in hand by her side through the whole of her life.

Our house was, as it were, divided into two. In one my mother was at home, in the other my father. Thus they were like two circles that barely touch each other. I did not stand midway between the two, but as my mother's petted darling belonged to the higher circle. I seldom came in contact with my father.

His quiet, serious nature, his calm, searching look, made me shun him. Neither did he take much notice of me, though I doubt not but that I was really dear to him.

My mother's circle was a refined one ; she was fond of gaiety. My father, however, seldom took any part in it ; and whenever he did I could not help feeling rather ashamed of him. For, though master of the house, he was extremely simple and retiring in his manner. Indeed, the greater part of his time was spent in the counting-house, the factory, or the warehouse.

My aunt on my father's side was the very reverse of my mother. She was an old maid, eccentric in character, and composed of anomalies, infirmities, and peculiarities. In all respects save one she was not to be relied on, and she was constantly over-stepping the mark in all directions. She was overstrained, capricious, and was always committing herself. A lady, properly speaking, she was not, but at times the whim would seize her to act the part of one. It was, however, merely an assumed character, one which she quickly abandoned. And yet, with all this, she was natural to a rare degree ; her heart was ever on her lips. She was extremely *naïve*, and her manner of talking so droll, that she was, as she herself

said, the only one who could enliven my serious, quiet father. And this was a duty she faithfully accomplished. Aunt Betty was far from being perfection. In the eyes of the world, which, by the way, but seldom caught a glimpse of her, she was, to use a mild expression, considered to be a queer sort of person. She only possessed one thing in perfection; and that was a heart, streaming over with love, prepared for any sacrifice; a heart whose nature and privilege it was to deny itself to promote the happiness of other people. On herself she never bestowed a thought. And her heart was full of a faith as deep, as lively, as simple, as a little child's. Of course she had her ups and downs in life; but her heart was always in its right place. And God dwelt in her heart. At times she often got into great confusion about her duties, and ran amuck of the commandments; but for all that the great commandment always stood out clearly before her eyes, containing in itself all the other commandments, and all the duties of life—"Love God; Love one another."

She had never been separated from my father from earliest childhood. Now she managed the household; for it was a large house, and possessed, as it were, two *ménages*.

If I were to compare her with Cinderella,

the simile, though not strictly correct, would still contain a good deal of truth. For while in domestic affairs her sway was acknowledged she was still everybody's servant. All the troubles and annoyances fell to her lot; she wore herself out for the house. But it was entirely her own doing; for if any one ever remonstrated she would become quite refractory, though usually of such a mild, amiable disposition. My lady-like mother never put finger to anything; to my aunt was entrusted the care of the whole establishment, of my father included. In a word, she was virtually mistress. To try and economize, to work, and to worry herself, were among the least of the burdens she had to endure; for she felt herself called on to bear the sorrows, pains, and troubles of the whole family. She took the blame of everything, and voluntarily made herself a scape-goat for the omissions and commissions of everybody else. All this she looked upon as the part assigned to her to fulfill in the world. She it was who acted as mediator between my parents, surpassing all of us in cleverness by her great simplicity. In truth, she formed a most important connecting link between them. But it was principally to my father she dedicated herself, hanging to him with a tenderness so touching

that words fail me to describe it. How well she understood how to make his comfortless home comfortable; to keep all vexations out of sight, and they were not few; to cheer him up with a merry speech which often came from a sad heart, in order to bridge over the wide space that lay between him and his wife—aye, and his child!

And how she loved me! Kind, good soul! My mother petted me, I will not say actually spoiled me; for she was too prudent to do that. But I have to thank my aunt for having been a good and pious child, notwithstanding all my indulgences. It was on her knee I learnt my first lesson in holy things; and it took root within, as nothing good ever did afterwards. Yes, the memory of those days is inexpressibly sweet to me, spite of all the bitterness of Hell. The attractive power of her love was so great that I would often slink away from my mother's handsome apartments, where I was lord and master, to pass my time with my aunt as a poor child, either in the kitchen, or in the little room she called her own. They were the happiest days I have ever passed.

Thus I received a sound religious education, but I did not owe it to my mother, though she was pious, too, after a fashion. But it did not strengthen with my growth. I grew up with

strong sensual passions, and at an early age I got a taste of the world.

Aunt Betty died ; she had literally worn herself out : affection is often a costly thing. Her death made a strong impression on me for the time, but it did not last long.

I was already engaged in the business of the office. My mother had made up her mind that I should follow a military, or, if possible, a diplomatic career. In good looks I took after her ; wealth I should inherit from my father, and in other respects I was by no means deficient. She was proud of me, and wished to see me distinguish myself in the world. But though my father had almost entirely given me over to my mother's care, on this point his mind was made up. I was to follow his profession, and become a steady business man.

And he was right. I had the gift of fascinating every one, a dangerous gift forsooth for persons of a nature like mine. Not only did I find the world ready to embrace me, but it literally dragged me to its arms, as the nymphs did Hylas. Thus I was ruined before the down on my cheek had begun to curl. Bad friends I had in numbers, but those of the other sex were by far the most dangerous. A time of compensation, however, came ; from being the seduced I soon became the seducer.

After I came more under my father's eye there was no lack of warnings, reproofs, and admonitions on his side. But it was of no use. I avoided him, and deceived him. But my mother had far greater influence with me. On the one hand, she made me feel that she was yielding enough to make excuses, and to pretend to be blind to my follies; while on the other she knew well how to represent the necessity of prudence and propriety in such colours as to make me promise to amend; and I actually did amend at her suggestions. I curtailed my excesses, and was careful not to create a scandal. At first the restraint was irksome, for I revelled in brutish lusts and passions; but if these latter were strong, my will was strong enough to tame them, and my mother's clever way of dealing with me made me will.

My father died when I was about twenty years old. He had never been seen to smile since Aunt Betty's death, for there was no one any longer in the world to make him cheerful!

I was taken into partnership when still very young, under the guidance of my father's brother, and shortly afterwards was attacked by a severe illness.

And now I am approaching one of the

darkest portions of my life. It is in truth but a little matter, dashed off hastily like a pencil sketch on a pleasure trip, but for all that it contains the germ of the bitterest remorse I suffer from. If in all other respects I could be washed clean, that dark spot would still remain.

When I became convalescent I was extremely weak and feeble. It was in the early part of the summer. The doctors recommended a trip into the country ; but I had no desire to repair to our country seat, for I was capricious and peevish to a degree. Perfect repose and quiet were ordered, and certainly they were not to be found there. A capricious whim accidentally decided the matter. During the former summer we had made an excursion to the sea-side ; and I brought before my mind a very small house, situated in the middle of a forest, so retired and still that it seemed as if Peace itself had taken up its dwelling there amidst those cool shadows of roses, ivy, and clustering honeysuckle. It belonged to some forester. If I went into the country at all, I would go there, and nowhere else.

After a great many objections had been raised, the matter was at length arranged, and we set out. The old forester was living alone

with a daughter who was just emerging into womanhood.

Anna! Little did I dream that this name would ever ring so terribly in my ears!

I regained my strength, but began to get tired of the place, pretty though it was; so to relieve the *ennui* from which I suffered I began to make love to Anna. She was little more than a farmer's daughter, but extremely graceful and unconstrained in manner and appearance. It seemed as if her whole being was in harmony with the surrounding landscape. Like the wood in whose midst she lived she was all freshness and sweet perfume. Nature could not possibly have presented anything more attractive to me than this young maid, so unrestrained, I might almost say wild, and yet so opposite to everything coarse or vulgar. We spent the greater part of our time in each other's company, for her father looked on her but as a child still, though she was just seventeen years old.

She it was who waited on me. But all the fine things with which I honoured her were lost on her. Light-footed as a deer, easily moved to laughter, she was not to be readily caught. She took care not to come too near me, not that she was afraid of any danger, for she suspected none; but like every free and open

nature she shunned bonds and snares. Her thoughts were far removed from what is termed love. She was contented in herself, and supremely happy ; her life was as joyous as a bird's, or as a butterfly's among the flowers. I have never known a disposition so thoroughly joyous, nor a nature so animated as hers. Sunshine or rain, she would sing under the open heaven ; she tripped, as it were, through the world.

But in a devilish mood I said to myself, " Wait awhile, my little one ; I will see if I cannot tame you."

I did not fall in love with her, our respective positions were too widely apart from each other for that. But my passions became keenly aroused, and gradually she grew more and more attractive to me.

And at last I succeeded in taming her, after having had recourse to numberless artifices. So thoroughly did I succeed that no one would have recognised her.

She faded away like a wild flower whose stalk has been crushed, or like a bird whose wing has been broken.

Her merry, ringing laugh was silent now ; her dauntless bearing was no longer to be seen. Quietly and sorrowfully, with downcast look and averted gaze, she slunk about. But

with a tenderness that had no match, with an affection that possessed no bounds, she now literally clung to me—me, her destroyer.

She knew that I had taken away her very life. Lost as she was she loved me still, though I it was who had been her ruin.

Then remorse began to fix its sharp talons into my heart. For I could not but feel affected at the display of so much real love. I was not utterly bad then.

And if she had been charming before, she was not the less so now.

It is true she was not the same person, but there was an enchantment in the transformation she had undergone. Formerly so free, so wild, like one whose neck has never bowed to the yoke ; and now humbled, and crushed like one who still even kisses the chains that bind him.

I reciprocated her love, or at least I fancied I loved her. And I began to think seriously about marrying.

But it was otherwise decided. My prudent, careful mother, got wind of it, and took upon herself the task of bringing me to reason. She began by pointing out the folly of such a step in a manner by no means calculated to exasperate, but none the less powerful. There was no ridicule in her words, but still she

made me feel that the whole affair was perfectly laughable. She did not seek to thwart my plans, but taught me gradually to regard them from another point of view. If I had ever really loved Anna, doubtless, I should not have given way. But the scales fell from my eyes: I did not love her: I only felt sorry for her.

To this point my mother would constantly revert; and then little by little began to divert my attention—not to speak of my desires—into another channel.

She had taken a little child into the house, some distant, orphan relative. She was born in America, and was now about nine or ten years of age. Up to this time I had scarcely ever noticed her. But now passing allusions were constantly being made of her surpassing beauty; and at last she gave me plainly to understand “that in seven or eight years’ time Lili would be one of the loveliest women, and one of the best matches in the world, and would, therefore, be sought after by hundreds. If I would only agree to dismiss Anna from my thoughts, and direct them towards Lili, she would not only promote my views, but would actually keep her for me. Of course, I should not marry her till she was grown up; meanwhile I might travel the world round

without being able to find a bride to compare with Lili."

Yes! it was all true. My imaginative powers came into play, and from that day forth I occupied myself a great deal with the little fatherless Creole.

Lili was, undoubtedly, a pretty child. I could form a very good opinion of what she would be, and my passions were accordingly aroused. Artless child that she was, she, of course, could not minister to them. But I derived a certain degree of enjoyment from her even now; even before I was aware of it I was won over to my mother's scheme.

There was something extremely exciting in these peculiar circumstances. To guard Lili for my very own, without her having the smallest idea of it herself; to watch her budding charms gradually developing themselves for me; to mould her according to my wishes; to see treasure upon treasure accumulate within her, till the time of enjoying all these had come. Call it unnatural if you please, but it was enchantment to such a nature as mine. You understand me, selfishness is an ogre, that devours everything around it without becoming satisfied, or even one whit the fatter. But I was more than selfish. There was the demon of lust within;

and however natural in other respects demons may be, they always find their greatest delight in acting contrary to nature.

I gave my mother free liberty to arrange matters about Anna in a becoming manner; and from that day I kept my promise, and never set eyes on her again.

Was it not a great sacrifice on my part? I feel it to have been so now!

CHAPTER V.

I AM beginning to feel myself at home—yes, at home! Sweetly and pleasantly as that word falls upon the ear above, in Hell it has a frightful sound. But Hell remains Hell whether we use the word home or not, and in Hell we must remain. The fact is we are compelled to feel ourselves at home.

This irresistible impulse of vainly imitating what we did on earth; of passing and of pursuing a shadowy existence with an actual desire in the heart; in this consists the “daily bread” of our torment in Hell, if I may use such a term. Yes! desire is a full reality; it is ever the same, though the bodily senses are dead. This it is that makes it so branded within, that it burns like a glowing flame. Our state here is not badly sketched in the fables of Tantalus and Sisyphus. In Hell nothing exists save desire alone, and everything is vain and fruitless. Truly is the saying exemplified here: “Vanity of vanities.”

All is illusion, and yet what a terrible reality!

I have accordingly resumed my former manner of life, not from pleasure, but from compulsion, with an inward feeling of loathing and disgust. Meanwhile I have got on very well in the circle in which for the time I am placed; I have renewed many old acquaintances, besides forming several new ones, which I should not have cared to do when in the world. How astonished you would be if I were to be so indiscreet as to mention names. For not only are there several respectable persons to be found here, but they actually form the greater proportion, just as they did in the world. There is no mistaking them. I refer to those who think only of attending to their own affairs, and of eating their bread in peace and quiet, caring for naught else, utterly regardless of that higher calling which makes all the children of one Father, and unites them in one family.

Only look around you. They throng about you, but pay no heed to you. They busy themselves, these men and women, in their public and private pursuits, in their domestic life, in their housekeeping and daily affairs. Few people have any idea that in the hubbub of daily life two of the most dangerous traps

are laid for them. Some drag themselves through life; others dawdle through it; and this they call "to live." And then suddenly it is ended, and they close their eyes, to open them again in torment.

Oh! if I had but one year of my life over again (and I am not thinking of myself alone), possibly I might be the means of saving some of those respectable individuals, fathers of families, and others, from inevitable destruction, whose thoughts never rise above their office desk, their dinner table, or their bed; and some of those exemplary housewives, too, and mothers of families whose ideas are concentrated in their saucepans or washing tubs. I say, possibly, because I know too well that in most houses doors and hearts would be shut against me.

Regarding the so-called benefactors of humanity, I have noticed one remarkable fact, that some of them (I say, some) have actually benefited hundreds of their fellow-beings, and have only been enemies to their own selves. But if you are wise, and would preserve your soul, beware of attaching any importance to the world's praise, of whatever nature it be. Like a worthless packet by express post, it will hurry you on to certain ruin.

But I must recollect where I am. I have

nothing more to do with the world. The multitudes I have alluded to above come into the torments of Hell without ever having been guilty of any gross crime. In the world it will be said (if only for the sake of the nice expression), "What a crying sin!" They felt themselves so secure, because they were unconscious of having committed any crime; and in this consciousness they discovered the fulness of righteousness. And yet, for all that, they have gone to Hell; though the greater number of them come here without any dominant passion within. "What a crying sin!" But their misery is equally great. Their punishment, indeed, consists in their having nothing to do, no avocations, no business, in which they can employ themselves. But if they have no passions, they have habits. And is there not a saying, "Old habits bite best?" In other words, habits are just as biting as passions. It is quite certain that if restlessness and weariness could kill people, and it were possible to die here, the greater proportion of Hell's denizens would die from sheer *ennui*, and Hell would be deserted.

After having been duly introduced, I live a very sociable life. You are astonished, perhaps, at my using the word "introduced," but without reason; for ought we to be quite

ignorant of good breeding and manners here? There is no art in going to Hell; but it is quite a different thing to be presentable in Hell. It is just the same as in the world, only with this difference: *there*, it depends on what a man is; *here*, on what he has been. In the world I was a handsome, agreeable, refined man, of large means. I am not that now, but I pretend to be. Do not think there is any trick in this; it is pure nature—purer than any house of correction in the world could render it.

At first, I was much bored with visits and invitations. Novelty is as much sought after here as in the world. If I had only brought with me a few of its silly, genteel fashions, I should have been heartily welcomed. But without wishing to say a word in my own praise, I brought nothing with me save a fashionable existence of a most vapid description. Shall I give you an account of a luxurious and festive party I attended recently? They had shown me the honour of inviting me in company with some of the greatest *gourmands* and drinkers the world ever knew. Truly, an unmerited honour! I have never been the one nor the other; on the contrary, have always adhered to that golden rule, "*Est modus in rebus.*" With a profusion almost un-

precedented, there was everything to tantalize the appetite and tickle the palate. And to judge by the witty remarks and obscene jokes that were bandied about, it went off very well. There was everything to tempt; but enjoyment was wanting! Prithee let me be silent on that score. Nothing was real at this banquet except inflamed passions; the guests had nothing else to consume save their own selves.

Our meat and drink consisted of an indescribable feeling of nothingness; in every mouthful, in every glass we raised to our lips, we felt ourselves inwardly consumed. And as for the jokes, they were merely old, stale, musty sayings, hashed up again in a variety of ways, rather calculated to produce disgust than merriment.

That person is not to be found in Hell who can give utterance to a really refreshing, amusing witticism. Meanwhile we were obliged to eat and drink, laugh and chat away as merrily as we could.

We were obliged, do you understand? If so, you have some idea what a banquet in Hell is.

Or shall I go further, and describe one of our orgies to you? I say *our*, but it is a rarity that I ever attend one of them. For they are more horrible in character than I can describe, and you know I lay great stress on

decorum ; so on those grounds I will not enter into details, but will only remark that the presence of the weaker sex by no means enhances one's enjoyment, but only increases the pain. Those empty kisses ! those shadowy embraces ! —Faugh ! let me pass them by in silence !

Whilst I was sitting at one of those sumptuous boards where nothing that luxury could supply was wanting, I could not but reflect on the condition of the peasant, the poor half-starved peasant, who has to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Oh ! but that wretched crust with which he appeases his craving hunger, that weak thin beer with which he slakes his thirst, forms a banquet, indeed, to which ours bears no comparison. If only to have something real to bite with the teeth, something real to swallow, whatever the drink may be—what a pleasure !

Is it not that incomparable hero Achilles, who, in the shades below, gives utterance to the remark, “that he would rather be the most miserable day-labourer on earth than a king or a hero without an equal in the lower world ?” It is but heathenish wisdom, yet how true ! For my part, I would ten thousand times be the most abject slave ; be crushed and bowed down by every sorrow, hard labour, and misery conceivable, than fill the highest

post, or the most respectable position, in Hell.

Of all the countless fools the world rears, none are greater than those who take away their own life, on the plea that it is impossible for them to be worse off than they are at present. Oh! but however great their worldly sufferings may be, they can still be far more miserable. They will long after the old condition, even though it had been the most wretched. Only offer them one ten times more wretched still, ten times more abject, and they would jump at it. If it were possible for you to do so, they would call you their saviour, and would eternally bless you.

There are but few, however, who carry folly to such a pitch as to lay violent hands on themselves. The greater number (and their number is legion) content themselves with giving vent to sighs and groans, by wearing sour and miserable faces, and thus shorten their days. Their shortening their life would not matter much, if they only made it better. But unfortunately, they do the very reverse, they kill and waste the remainder of their days in ceaseless discontent. They are discontented with themselves; with the world; with the very air they breathe; the ground they walk on; the light that falls on their eyes.

And why are they dissatisfied? Because forsooth their health is not quite so good in some respects as could be desired; because the world occasionally goes against them; or because their position in life does not quite harmonize with their views and tastes; or because others are better off than themselves; or because they have had greater struggles to contend against than other people; or because life has been a grand mistake, and their fondest hopes and aspirations have suffered shipwreck.

I do not say that all this is nothing. On the contrary, life is full of hardships to most persons, to many it overflows with them. But this I do say. If you who are wasting away your time in discontent, could only look on matters from this place, you would find that however interwoven your earthly lot may be with sorrows, affliction, and misery, there is yet a bright side to it. So much depends on the way in which a person meets anything. If instead of staring till you are dazed at your misfortunes, disowning them as it were, you were to make them part and parcel of yourself, were to use them as a powerful incentive to action, how totally different your lot would appear to you. Many a misfortune is a misfortune only in imagination; under proper treatment it disperses.

And many an actual misfortune can often implant the germ of new aspirations, and thus lay the foundation of a better and a happier life. Yes, if you could only view things from this place, it would at once be evident to you that a man (an able man naturally) can bear a very great deal, can reconcile himself to many a misfortune, loss, and trouble, and still be a happy man. You would find that each day, even of such a life as that you are leading now, was a precious, a costly thing; a gift from Heaven, for which it were impossible to be sufficiently grateful. You would understand how my soul longs to be in your place; how fortunate I should prize myself, if I could only occupy the position of the most wretched being among you all.

It is all clear to me now; but 'tis too late! too late!

That we worry ourselves with stiff and elegant parties, just as of old, is a natural consequence. Drawing-room life occupies no small portion of our existence. But if this description of "high life" used to be hollow, and killing work before, imagine what it is now, where hollowness and death are pre-supposed. When I reflect upon it, I cannot conceive how ever I could have made such a victim of myself to the world. It is exactly

as if some evil, malicious spirit were at the bottom of it all. As if it dragged some twenty to fifty persons by the roots of the hair (who for the most part would have been very comfortable and happy at home—persons, who, generally speaking, do not even know one another), and shut them all up together in a brilliantly lighted suite of apartments. And that is called a party! Doubtless, the spirit enjoys the fun immensely, but the poor victims are ready to die of *ennui* and weariness the while. At last when the spirit has amused himself enough for once, the enchantment is over. The company separates; the lights are put out! After the long and unnatural constraint, people come to their senses once again. Host and hostess say from their heart, "Thank God, it is all over!" While their guests ejaculate just as heartily, "So glad to get home again!"

I said just now, I could not conceive how ever I could have victimized myself for such formalities. But here it is quite a different matter. The constraint imposed on us here is far greater, ten times more terrible, than any spirit, however malicious, could impose.

Well! We go into society just as of old. Here, as there, the great aim is to show oneself; to act a part, and above all to bore one-

self to death by attention to *etiquette*. Here also, as there, it is our aim to wear a pleasing exterior, and to say pleasant things. And yet there is a great, a radical difference, which makes our position as painful as it is wonderful. For in Hell one sees not only through the external garb, but into the very soul. So when a person says with a smiling face, "How delighted I am to see you! how very fortunate to meet you here!" and thinks at the same time, "Shall I quarrel with the old witch again?" the party addressed reads all one's thoughts, as plainly as she hears the words. But we soon learn to arrive at a certain degree of *nonchalance*, or recklessness in such matters, otherwise all intercourse amongst us would be unbearable. At the moment I am talking, doubtless, the advantage is on the lady's side; but directly she opens her mouth it is on mine; for I can read her thoughts as plainly as she can mine. We are quits!

But there is one very disagreeable circumstance connected with it; it is a confounded obstacle to all flirtations. It would be an impossibility to carry on an intrigue with a woman here, even if her virtue were rather frail. All the compliments of the world could not cozen her. Therefore, in one respect, we are a very virtuous set. Above all there is

great difficulty in getting flattery and compliments to take. Our hearts are our deceivers, in a different sense though to what they were in the world.

On the whole it is utterly impossible to form any idea of the number of surprising events that take place here each day. Viewed from this place the world appears as a land of dreams and imagination, but none the less lovely and desirable. Anomalous as it may seem, here where everything is unreal, reality for the first time appears naked and unvarnished. Whether it be friends or enemies that meet, they quickly arrive at a mutual understanding, seldom, by the way, of a very agreeable nature.

Would you like to hear an instance or two? The following are culled from the most recent annals of gossip :

A. had been shot in a duel in which he was engaged in order to wipe out an insult that had been offered to his young and devoted wife. To his great astonishment he met his late antagonist a few days ago, who had also gone the way of all flesh, and come to Hell.

In a fit of exasperation he went up to him, but was met by the other with the utmost *sang-froid*.

“Fool! are you going to fly into another

passion, and for nothing too? Away with it—let us be friends!”

“For nothing!” hissed out A. “Was it nothing that you insulted my wife, and then took my life, when I stood forth to defend her?”

“I will tell you the truth,” was the reply. “You take a wrong view of the matter entirely. It stands simply as follows: I was your wife’s lover, but did not wish to be so any longer. That was the insult! Then she set you on against me. I say again, away with it—let us be friends!”

Whether they ever became friends I cannot say; but I only know that this piece of information cooled A.’s blood.

* * * *

Two cousins were sitting together in confidential conversation. They were Germans.

“Yes! I was born a poet!” said one of them. “I wrote romances, and my first works made a tremendous sensation.”

“True! Perhaps I know more about it than any one else,” answered his cousin. “It was I who wrote the reviews in the papers and journals! It was I who brought you into notoriety, my dear Coz! Such things are easily managed in our beloved fatherland, if one only has a few connections, and just enough wit so as to avoid being tedious.”

“What do you mean?—you?—I am sure I am extremely obliged to you. You must indeed have taken a deal of trouble.”

“Yes, indeed, I did,” answered his cousin. “The trouble was exactly proportionate to the love I bore you. Have we not been like brothers ever since we were little children?”

Cousin number one thereupon became thoughtful. After a long pause he resumed :

“Yes, indeed, I was uncommonly fortunate. I became really quite the rage, and saw brilliant prospects before me. But all at once a change took place, which I never could account for. The reviews suddenly became so bitter and cutting, that I could no longer find a publisher, and after several fruitless and abortive attempts was obliged to come down a peg or two.”

“I can explain that too, to your entire satisfaction,” answered his companion. “I tore you to pieces in the paper; I made you the object of a formal persecution; directly you gave utterance to a line, I was down upon you, so that at last you had to give it up.”

“How?—You?”

“Yes; it is quite true! But of course I did it for the best. Your beloved mother, who had also been a mother to me, charged me with her

last breath to do all in my power to arrest your future progress along the road to ruin, on which you had already set out. You had no poetical talents; on the contrary, you were exactly cut out for a butter merchant, a business which had been in your family for generations, and which was a very lucrative one. I saw it at once; it was all stuff about your literary fame. I had blown the bladder full, it is true, but I could not keep it inflated. In everything you wrote the wind kept escaping between the lines. Certainly you met your fate half way. Then I set to work. In the interest of poetic art, of butter dealing, and of your own, I summoned all my talents and sarcasm to crush you to the ground as often as you appeared in print; and my endeavours were crowned with the most signal success. Your family grew proud of you; and you became a respectable butter merchant, burgher, and a patriot!"

"And am in Hell," interrupted the unfortunate poet, rather peevishly; "but should I ever have come here had the road to Parnassus not been so shamefully blocked against me?"

"Well, that is a question, certainly," answered his cousin quietly. "But of this I am quite convinced, that poetry was as little likely to gain you admission into Paradise, as that butter is the cause of your being in

Hell. But come, are we not like brothers? I meant it all for the best. What I did, I would not have done for any one else."

But the poetical butter dealer turned angrily away; he had heard more than he could digest all at once.

* * * *

"Nay, what, you here, my dear fellow?" exclaimed a fat, pudgy little man, embracing a conspicuous-looking fop who had advanced to meet him. "I am glad and yet grieved to see you here. You were the only one who stood by me in my trouble. When I had lost everything all my friends deserted me; but you, you alone stuck to me."

"Not everything, my dear friend," was the mild answer. "You are making too much of it—not everything. You had your wife left you still."

* * * *

Two monks were sitting together engaged in earnest conversation.

"But tell me," said the one, "tell me, dear brother, how it was that you came to go into a cloister?"

"The answer is very simple,—through my own stupid folly. I fell desperately in love with Lisella Neri, of our town; you may perhaps remember her. She was reputed to

be a great beauty, and an excellent match ; but as I could not get her, and in fact no one else, I got disgusted with life, and entered a cloister ; and I have repented it ever since. That is my simple tale. But what made you go into a cloister ?”

“ A very different reason to yours,” was the reply. “ I, too, had a hankering after Lisella, was accepted, and became the unhappiest husband under the sun. Lisella was the most capricious and ill-tempered little vixen in the world, and she did not care a pin for me. I never had a moment’s peace. So at last I jumped at the only loop-hole open to me. I left her all I possessed, and entered a cloister, and have never repented doing so ; for if ever I did feel at all discontented with my lot, I had only to think of Lisella, and my ill-humour vanished at once.”

After this piece of information the first monk remained a little while buried in deep thought.

“ Well, I can make nothing out of it,” at length he said, “ except that no man can avoid his destiny. As far as I can see, I should have entered a cloister whatever had happened. But you, brother, became the happier of the two—not by Lisella, the pretty witch,—but by the sad experience she taught you.”

But enough of this. I wonder how I can tell such tales. If you think it affords me any pleasure to do so, you are very much mistaken. Amusement in Hell is always connected with the bitterest pain.

Martin, poor Martin, what has become of thee? Truly he suffered a great wrong. Badly brought up, badly managed, he was my work.

She was a pretty little girl, just about his age. I made her acquaintance as she was scouring a staircase. Menial though her occupation was, she still presented a most attractive spectacle to the eye of a connoisseur. I question whether she could possibly have appeared to greater advantage under any circumstances whatsoever. The exertion which set her young blood and limbs in motion; her *negligée* style of dress and manner; on the whole the entire absence of restraint about her, set her off wonderfully. I snatched her away from the humiliating position, to which her nature was little adapted, and placed her in a respectable family, where she could be properly clothed and educated.

Naïve and simple though she was, she seemed to understand that I did not do all this for nothing. But she was still rather too unpolished for me, and I knew how to wait.

How ever Martin and she got acquainted I cannot make out ; but the first sight seems to have decided it. Simultaneously, as if by an electric spark, the flame was kindled in both their hearts, and a mutual understanding was the speedy result.

Martin openly acknowledged his attachment to me. I ought to have regarded it, but I did not. Stung to the quick, I hated him fiercely for what he had done. Then he left me in anger. Just as determined as I should have been, he never reflected for a moment on the results, but carried off the girl under my very eyes.

She was not to be found anywhere ; but he did not hide himself, but defiantly presented himself before me. Then I drove him from my house, and as I thought from my heart. But I was deceived ; no, not from my heart.

What could he have had to communicate that would smooth matters between us ? Did it refer to himself or to her ?

“ A higher power had judged between us ! ”

These enigmas are enough to drive one wild.

Many riddles, but only one question ; and this one burns like a brand into my soul, and gives me insufferable agony. Possibly it may cause my ghost to revisit the earth.

But would my question be answered then ?

CHAPTER VI.

LET me give you a description of Lili. But I foresee that my description of her as a child cannot quite exclude my description of her as a woman. And I must add that I see her now before me as she was at a far later date. Then I did not see her, did not know her, though I anatomized her with my eyes. But it was a mere carnal look then! What so blind as passion?

She was a Creole. Her features were delicate, finely traced, though not classically regular; her soft hair was of a lustrous black; her eyes, like twin stars, of so deep a blue that they appeared almost to be black, veiled over by long silken eyelashes in the most fascinating manner. Her figure was light, graceful, perfectly symmetrical, and well filled out, while her hands and feet were of the most exquisite shape. Such, in short, was Lili. Perhaps her eyes were the loveliest feature she possessed. Ah, they gaze into my very soul even

now ! Never, to all eternity, shall I forget the melting glances of her bright eyes, half tears, half smiles ; despondent, and yet so full of promise ! They never failed to touch my heart.

A Creole girl is generally thought to be passionate, wayward, and capricious. Nothing, however, was further from Lili's nature than either of these qualities. It is true she was of an ardent temperament ; but it possessed a glow so mild, so fervent ; not issuing forth in passionate outbursts, but rather dissolving itself within in genial warmth. Where the right, or truthfulness, or love demanded it of her, her will was firm as a rock. In all else she was docility itself. Utterly unselfish herself, affection was the law, the necessity of her being. Poor child ! No greater misfortune could have befallen her than to meet with one, who was made up of pure selfishness and of naught else.

She was, as it were, all heart. At a more mature age a physician pronounced the organization of her heart to be defective ; some said it was too large. And I can well believe it, for I never knew a heart so easily moved as hers. Affection was the sole thing she longed after. It often needed but one kind word, aye, or even one kind look, to make her

fall on my neck, and nestle to my bosom. Her heart would burn within her at almost anything. The trials and sufferings of mankind, their fortunes and misfortunes, their joys and sorrows, she made the one object of her study. Sympathy was her life and breath.

I could not but think sometimes that she was not made to live in the world.

It will, therefore, be readily understood that a girl with a nature such as hers would often feel herself repulsed and wounded in her intercourse with her fellows, would feel like a stranger among them.

On that account she kept mostly by herself, or with me, wretched being that I am. Hence it was that her nature was simple to a degree, but not of that stamp that marks the fool, but which is rather the characteristic of true genius. I am convinced that if she had ever become old and grey-headed, she would have retained the child within her. Nothing was easier than to make her believe anything, provided it did not offend her fine moral sense. It never occurred to her that anybody could impose upon her. Once or twice I did so, but never more. I bitterly repented it. Shameless impudence would even have stepped aside for her holy innocence. She was one of those choice

natures to which the scum of the world seemed as if it could not adhere. I dare almost say that she could have passed through the lowest depths of sin and infamy without receiving the least taint. It never occurred to her to believe evil of any one. Her eyes were never opened to the truth that it was an evil world in which we live. Sin she knew to exist; in her childish nature she had the deepest consciousness of its existence. But as to vice, she never knew anything of it as long as her foot trod the earth.

I should be doing myself injustice if I were to say I felt all this now for the first time. No. I felt it then, bad as I was. But I must again sigh, "What a match, she and I!" It was sheer spirit against the flesh. Poor Lili!

Of knowledge she possessed but little, if the number of subjects be taken into account. History was her favourite study, for it told her about human beings; their toils and labours, their fortunes and sorrows; otherwise it was a dead language to her. In mechanical accomplishments she was therefore deficient; indeed, it was a fruitless task to try and teach her even a foreign language. Naturally, therefore, where her feelings had so much play, she became thoughtful and dreamy, though we did our best to drive it out of her. But it

is always a thankless task to work against nature. She was not reserved though ; for to me at least she confided the inmost thoughts of her soul.

The sacred narrative, of all others, was her favourite study. From it her spirit drew its first nourishment ; and the impression she received was deep indeed.

“God who loved lost creatures to death, even the death of the cross.” Nothing ever moved her at a later period so much as this affection and this suffering. Over and over again she would read it ; an angel must have counted the tears she shed over its pages. Though unlike the Magdalene, in all else she resembled her in her burning love towards the Crucified One.

At a later period the history of the Crusades formed an epoch in her life. The Crucified was her first love, the Crusades her first enthusiasm. In a few weeks she seemed to have become years older, so powerfully had the idea possessed her. Henceforth the Holy Land, where God’s Son had lived and suffered, became the darling object of her aspirations. On one or two occasions she betrayed her thoughts, to her lasting sorrow ; for her young friends nicknamed her “The Crusader,” and whenever they met her, even though they did not speak a word, they would cross their fingers

significantly at her. It was a terrible and expressive pantomime !

Thus, in a measure, the Saviour's cross had become her cross. She was deeply wounded at their coarse jests, and from that time never once alluded to the Holy Land. But, doubtless, her heart thought the more about it, though her lips were silent. I say perhaps, for circumstances at a later period made me suspect that such was the case, though I could not be quite certain.

Is it not true, then, that she did not seem to be formed for the world, at least not for my world ?

If I had not been the wretch I was, a mere glance at her would have confirmed my opinion. Lovely, pure as an angel ; though all her loveliness was as nothing when compared with the beauty of her mind. During my whole life beauty and pleasure were the only things that had any attraction for me. But never have I known anything more ravishing than the perfect attachment of that childlike heart, in which no drop of impure blood, no grain of falsehood, no shadow of selfishness, harboured. Never have I experienced anything so captivating as her angelic tenderness, so devoid of cloud, so free from reserve, so forgetful of self, so unassuming, that

regarded itself as poor and mean, and yet acted as if it had a thousand lives and a thousand blessings to bestow.

It was impossible to be quite uninfluenced by the hallowed powers that dwelt within her ; at times indeed, especially when she could no longer be looked on as a child, the influence they exerted on me was very powerful. But, and I must confess it, I regarded her from the very first with unhallowed looks. I had hurriedly entered into my mother's plans, and not only did I watch over the pretty child, but I literally brooded over her. Already I regarded her as mine, and calculated in advance what she would bring me in in the course of time. She was not difficult to win, and I won her completely. Whenever I wished, she would lie in my arms, stretch out her little cheek to be kissed, and leave her sweet tiny hand in mine.

Thus a couple of years fled away, when my mother deemed it prudent to interpose.

"It will not do," she said, "you are enjoying your future in advance, and will ruin it. She will become developed far too early, if things go on thus. You must be separated for a time. Travel ; remain away for a few years. Meanwhile I will educate Lili for your happiness and joy. Travel, my son ; some day you will thank me for this advice."

❖

I felt she was right, that it was absolutely necessary; and I constrained myself to follow her advice, in the interests of prudence, or rather of a gross passion. A short time previously it had been decided on sending one of the partners abroad; and as my uncle, who was head of the firm, could not go, and as my cousin, who was second partner, had a great disinclination to leave home at that time, I announced my readiness to travel, at my mother's urgent request. And I set out. They had to tear the weeping girl from my embrace. But, though much moved myself, I consoled myself with the thought, "we shall meet again, my little bride, and then I shall have gained more than you have lost now."

My sojourn abroad lasted longer than I had anticipated, but at length the time came when I could return. During my absence I had received frequent letters from home, and from Lili too.

Wonderful letters! They seemed as if they were penned by an angel's hand. And, although these ethereal communications—let me style them—were somewhat strange and foreign to my nature, still they made a deep impression on me. I felt an indescribable, though I fear not a holy delight at being able to say, "This blessed, innocent

child is mine ; and it is I who will make her some day feel that she too is flesh and blood, a child of the world."

At last I returned home, and saw her once more. Oh ! enchantment ! My expectations were more than surpassed. There she stood before me, graceful and slender in figure, incomparably lovely, with a soft blush diffused over her cheeks, her eyes modestly cast downwards, and her young bosom gently heaving with emotion. She was just then on the threshold of womanhood, scarce yet fifteen years old. The instant I pronounced her name, she raised her eyes to mine, and fixed on me a gaze so beaming over with happy love, that it went to my heart. It was but one look, yet it told volumes. The next moment she was clasped to my bosom.

Shall I call it a happy period that now ensued ? If it was, neither was it without pain. When I saw Lili before me, it was just as if I were reading her letters again, and yet the feeling of enjoyment was far, far greater. Still there was no gratification in it, as I began to feel each day of my intercourse with her. Her aspirations were as widely remote from mine as heaven is from earth ; and I felt this to be the case even when I embraced her in my arms and called her my own. The same

child as before, but more developed; affectionate as ever, and yet this very affectionateness caused me anguish; for, what was truth and reality to her, to me was mere vanity. Her love and mine, therefore, were two very different things.

Thus we continued to live together for a while, when my prudent mother again interfered:

“She must have time and opportunity given her for development, otherwise her fine and delicate nature would be injuriously forced. Moreover, from living in such close and daily intercourse with her, she would learn to regard me as a brother, and that was surely not my wish. I had better live apart, and not be too prodigal of my visits. At the same time there was no reason why I should not make myself as agreeable and necessary to her as I pleased. But I must promise her that I would not breathe a word about love till she had completed her seventeenth year.”

On this point my mother was determined, so I gave her my word, and moved into lodgings. On the whole, I perceived that it was to my advantage, and felt satisfied with the change. Lili was very backward, and my presence evidently did not conduce to her progress. As for myself it was as if I could get

a better view of her now, and I found her twice as lovely as ever. I noticed also that her manner towards me began to be different. No longer a child, she would blush up to her eyes whenever she saw me; and I had, therefore, to be very careful in my intercourse with her, and the precaution proved of real benefit to me, though not the less a trial, and that a severe one, notwithstanding that it was rich in blessings.

I made inquiries about Anna. Her father had long since been dead, and nobody knew what had become of her. Very likely my mother knew, but I could never bring myself to question her; so I cast the recollection away from me, and Lili's presence unconsciously helped me to do so.

But soon I had other things to harass me.

Lili was evidently drooping. She had just arrived at that critical time when the woman in her rebelled against the childish nature, and was making every exertion to usurp its place. But her constitution was too weak and frail for the struggle. So it was arranged that we should spend the winter in the south for the benefit of her health, and for my diversion.

Lili had grown very thoughtful, and often indulged in reveries. It was not unnatural; and never had she appeared so charming than

when endeavouring to solve the great enigma of life. But, when taken in connection with other circumstances, this was considered to be rather an alarming symptom.

“Her system required to be gently, and yet fully re-invigorated,” such was the advice the physicians gave.

So we set out, early in the autumn, mother, Lili and I.

And here the bright period of my life may be said to have begun, with only just enough of darkness in it as is necessary to the existence of shade. Lili's state disturbed me but little; passion caused me but a transitory pain. A period of about a year passed, I will not say quite free from spot or blemish, but without my having anything to reproach myself for; in short, it was Elysium! And now . . . I am in Hell!

We were so happy together! My mother naturally was amiability itself. I, at least, was on my good behaviour, while Lili literally revelled in the freedom of her manner of life, which brought with it so many and such varied enjoyments. With increasing confidence she would now hold up her lovely head, would cast her beaming gaze over the beauties of the world with greater freedom; physically and mentally her beauty developed itself in a

marvellous manner. One single half-year had produced a great change in her. Womanhood had budded forth in the first radiance of youth, fresh and pure as a rose, bejewelled with the early dews of morning. And, at the same time, a change had taken place in her manner towards me. Though tender and affectionate as ever, there was a maidenly reserve about her. No longer the little one who had hitherto lived in that which was external to herself, she now found a life within, immeasurably rich and lovely. We approached each other more on equal terms.

Equal, did I say? Yet she far surpassed me in the rich endowments of heart and soul. In a very short time, she gained a wonderful power and influence over me. Gladly I submitted to the yoke; there was a pleasure in it more ennobling, more delightful, than anything I had ever felt. She raised me, as it were, above myself without my knowledge. New feelings, new interests and pursuits, were beginning to bud within me, and it dawned upon me with an ever-increasing clearness that there was something in the world of greater worth and nobility than selfish love and selfish pleasures. Day by day my nature became ennobled and purified from contact with hers. I was on the road to become a good, pious, and loveable

man, or rather, let me say in one word, a man.

Her eyes had opened themselves wide to the beauty of the world, a beauty of a very different nature to that which I had ever known; and, by degrees, I, too, came to see with them. But her gaze and her aspirations were directed upwards. Earth could not rivet them. It was as if she saw Heaven opened above her; and, can you believe it, she took me with her in her heavenly flight, heavily laden though I was in the flesh? What power, what might, in a being so frail and delicate! But it cost her no exertion. She drew me with her: in her I forgot aught else. I listened to the words that fell from her lips as attentively as if she had been some prophetess predicting for me countless blessings, and was transported away from earth. An entirely new world, a spiritual world, opened itself to my enraptured gaze; even life eternal, that consummation of bliss, began to dawn upon me. How many ennobling hours can I recall, that I passed with her.

My God! what recollections! and oh! what torture!

I began to be actually ashamed of myself when I reflected on what I had been. That love which I had felt so long for Lili—love, in-

deed it was! but what a love! It would have terrified her had she had the least inkling of it. But she never got to know it. True, there were moments when the old ravening nature made itself felt within; when dizzy with passion, I was well-nigh losing my self-control. At such times I would madly press her to my bosom, and embrace her with the glowing ardour of passion; or else cast myself down before her, clasp her knees, or kiss her feet while the hot, burning tears rained down upon them. Then she would be terrified at my violence, and would press her hand upon her heart, as if her spirit were passing away. But she did not understand it; the meaning of it all was far remote from her chaste mind. In her innocence, she only felt the sincerest compassion for me, only thought to soothe me. She would call me by the most endearing names, would let her tears flow with mine—two streams, forsooth, of a widely different nature—the one turbid and muddy, the other bright and pure as crystal. And the power of her innocence never failed to recall me to my senses. The promise I had made my mother flashed again across my mind, and, though it cost me much, I still found strength in the thought that soon, very soon, the temptation would be over. And then, when the

paroxysm was passed, the same happy blessed days returned.

I think I have now explained the relations that existed between us. There was a wild beast within, but she had tamed it.

It was spring once more, and we were beginning to think of retracing our steps homewards. Lili had on one or two occasions suffered from rather alarming symptoms, which the physicians—half charlatans—of that country called “oppression of the heart.” At that time we were on one of the Ionian Isles. But we would not allow it to disturb us; for Lili had of late grown stronger, and had become more lovely than ever, as she now stood forth in the full bloom of youth. We were too happy in her, too secure in our joy.

But as we began to talk of bending our steps homewards, a strange restlessness took possession of her. I sought, of course, to learn the cause, and found to my surprise that there was a yearning desire of her heart yet unsatisfied, of older date and of a different character to mine. Suddenly the whim of her childhood—a visit to the Holy Land—had returned. Or had it ever left her? Had it not only been lulled to sleep for a little while? Probably so. She begged, she entreated me not to return till I had let her see the Holy

Land, however short and hasty our visit might be. "Unless she did this, she would never have a moment's peace; but only let her get there through my help, and she would eternally bless me."

I could not but regard it as a fanciful idea, though, at the same time, it was impossible to help admiring the steadfastness with which she had clung to it from her very childhood. Aye! not only did I admire it, but I felt myself so moved that I determined to use all my influence in order to promote her wishes. Had she even asked for anything still more unreasonable, I could not have withstood her entreaties; for it seemed as if her very life lay in my hands when she besought me so earnestly.

I spoke to my mother about it. She reluctantly gave her consent, and this last little trip was decided upon. It would only occupy a few weeks, we thought, and so we set out. That look with which she thanked me, that soft, angelic look, brimming over with love, still burns in my heart, and will burn there till the judgment day. Thenceforth a heavenly peace was diffused over her whole being. Her restlessness was gone now, for her joy was complete.

But a few words more, and my narrative is ended. Why should I pain myself by

telling more? it is greater than I can bear already.

We had set foot on the Holy Land. I made Lili enter it as a princess, while I was but her chief servant. But she had no princely thoughts about her; she entered it as a lowly pilgrim. We spent some weeks in running about from place to place. Lili was suffering more than we suspected; but she could not rest. Her malady was a dangerous heart disease, and already serious symptoms were showing themselves. How blind we had been! I say we, for perhaps it had not escaped my mother's quick eye.

An unlucky combination of circumstances caused it to break out in a sudden and alarming manner. In a cloister at Bethlehem, where we had to crave admittance, she breathed her last, a few days only before she would have completed her seventeenth year. She had passed away with an angel's hallowed smile upon her lips; the goal of her life was reached. Her earthly career had been but a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

In her, death had lost all its terrors. She lay as one transfigured; pale and more lovely in a higher sense than a worldly one, with her hands folded meekly over her breast; a breast where in the world had never found a resting-place.

You will scarcely believe it when I tell you that even in her last hours, when I saw for a certainty that she was lost to me, she raised me up with her far above the level of perishable things. And I felt myself so comforted, as if this earthly life were a thing of naught, as if I should ere long meet her in a better place, where sorrow, tears, and suffering are no more, and where death and partings are unknown.

Oh! what a conception!

Her last words—and they sounded so soft, so spiritual, just as if they came from another world—were thanks and blessings:

“Thanks, Otto! I am so happy. . . God bless you. . .”

I was very nearly losing my composure through my emotion; but I had an inward feeling that in a little while I could have conquered all pains.

In one hallowed kiss I received her last breath.

But scarcely was the breath gone out of her than I came to myself again, and the old brutal nature re-appeared once more. I had but one thought, “What had I lost in her! what a treasure of beauty and grace! what a consummation of enjoyment! And so close to my happiness, too; but a few days more and

she had been mine." I raged like a wild beast whose prey has been snatched away from it. She had escaped me!

This, then, was the fruits of my self-denial for years and years; of the many sacrifices I had made; of the forbearance I had shown. In her I had year by year treasured up my all, and had lost it in a single moment.

And yet was it not better that she should have escaped the miserable fate she would have met with in my arms?

O Lili, Lili! . . . I think I could even rejoice at it . . . if I were not in Hell!

My mother mourned also, but never lost her composure; it was mostly for my sake she grieved. So we returned home, after having buried Lili in the Holy Land.

She rests beneath a sycamore, not far from the place where her Saviour was born.

It was on our return home from this journey that I met with and adopted the boy Martin. Sad remembrance!

So I became the man I was to remain. I gave myself up to the world; lived only for my own enjoyment; loved only myself, with the exception, perhaps, of my mother and my adopted son. I say, perhaps; for I dare not positively assert that I really did love them. I was called a Christian, but was not one.

True, I was not of the number of those who make a mock at holy things, for after Lili's death nothing was longer holy to me. Now and then childish thoughts from bygone days tried to assert their influence, but I was afraid of them, and thrust them hastily aside each time. In a word, I believed in what is termed Christianity only just so far as it suited my views, and my faith gradually dwindled away.

My mother began to look old; but increasing years seemed to have no influence over her. She continued to be beautiful, always the perfect lady, ever an object of universal admiration. Always of a pious disposition, she now became very religious, and sought to make me so too. But her powers did not extend so far as that. She could not get me to do more than observe Christian rites and ceremonies. For my own sake I maintained a decorous manner in all my dissipations.

And now I have done! It has cost me much to complete these confessions. Do not think it gives me any satisfaction to do so; still it seems to have lightened a heavy burden, and that is always something.

CHAPTER VII.

THE light waxes slowly stronger. The highest point it ever reaches is but a clear twilight; and then the splendour of Paradise is at hand, though still far distant. Time passes as it may, in sorrow, regret, and suffering. You must not think that because I am able to interest you, I can in any way interest myself. Alas! it is only a delusion, as everything else here in Hell is. Time passes on, true enough; but brings no relief with it. In the world there was always this consolation, "there will be an end to it;" but here—and that is the terrible thing—here there never will be an end. Among the minor things on which I used to set great store was to gain admission as a bachelor to ladies' tea and coffee parties. There was something unusually attractive to me in the slander and gossip that was bandied to and fro at them. Of course on such occasions I used to look as innocent as possible for fear of spoiling the fun.

I still feel the same interest, still follow it up.

Of course there is pain attached to it; everything is painful in Hell.

Well, tea and coffee parties, slander of course included, abound here. In the world we used to denominate anything that was very weak and diluted as "tea wash." But the weakest "tea wash" in the world is a strong drink compared with the tea and coffee poured out at these parties. Neither has slander lost anything by its long passage here; on the contrary, the tongue knows no restraint.

Propriety and decorum too are totally disregarded. Nothing too bad, too shameful, too secret, but it is dragged forth by these sisters of slander when once they have warmed to the work. They seem inspired; the one surpassing the other in venomous fabrication and scandal. But there is one remarkable circumstance, that when once these good ladies have done their best at backbiting others, they begin involuntarily to speak against themselves. It is no use striving against it; they are compelled to unfold the secrets of their own lives, however private, however disgraceful they may be. To see how the other dear creatures enjoy it; how they wink at one another, bite their lips, and nearly go out of their senses for joy. But their enjoyment

lasts only up to a certain point; that is, till it comes to their turn to speak; then they, too, against their will, give the others a full and ample revenge.

I have just come from one of these parties, and feel in the humour to give you one or two characteristic anecdotes.

The lady who was talking, though young no longer, had very pretty features. Perhaps a taste not so nice as mine would have pronounced her beautiful. The experiences of life often leave behind a very lovely impress on the faces both of men and women; but with the greater number, especially with women, it assumes an expression of bold impudence which is never pleasing. The speaker was one of this description.

“Really, my dear friends,” she began, in an affected voice, “we ought not to speak ill of our neighbours. I believe there is a commandment expressly forbidding it. But as you have asked me about that strange couple that just passed, something, by the way, like a bulldog mated with a crane, I will tell you in a few words what I know about them.

“The man, then, was one of the most devoted l’hombre players in the world. Even on his death-bed he would insist on having his game of l’hombre.

“‘Pass!’ he ejaculated, and drew his last breath. Whether the points were ever settled I cannot say; but this I do know, that his widow was so deeply moved at it, that she gave the servant a sound box on the ear, because she did not walk softly enough to please her. Evil tongues very likely said that she was so afraid lest her poor dear man might waken up again.

“But there was no fear of that; he was really dead, and remained dead and was buried. On his tombstone was placed the following simple but expressive epitaph:

“‘J. J. P.

“‘HE SHUFFLED THROUGH LIFE!’

“I shall never forget the day of the funeral. We were at our country seat, a few miles from town.

“‘Dear A——,’ I said to my husband, ‘don’t you think you ought to follow poor P—— to the grave?’

“After a few growls he allowed that, perhaps, he ought to do so. So it was arranged that he should go to town the next morning.

“Now, I knew very well, whenever my husband went to town, he never returned home till the following morning. It was a little diversion for him. I suppose he went to his

club; and I am sure I never found any fault with him for it. Husbands are not now what they should be.

“ Well, I got the dear fellow to take a note for me, and made him promise to deliver it directly he got into town. I had a friend living there, I should tell you, who, by the way, was no friend of my husband’s. He was a distant cousin of mine, but my husband, oddly enough, disapproved of his visits to our house. A very grievous fault in him ! But my cousin liked it, and I liked it, and so it was rather difficult to prevent our meeting whenever an opportunity occurred. Whether it is part of a cousin’s duty, I cannot say, but, anyhow, he took upon himself the office of teaching me how to love. So neglected, indeed, had my education been in this respect, that even in my nineteenth year I did not actually know what love meant. My husband could not teach me; he was too old and awkward. But with my cousin it was a very different matter. But let me hasten to assure you, on my honour, that our relations with each other were of the most innocent and harmless nature conceivable; we had scarce passed the introductory stage.

“ Well, my husband set out with the letter to my *lady* friend, who, of course, was none

other but this cousin. I thought it such a capital joke that he, dear man, should be the bearer of the letter. Enough, then, when I tell you that my husband spent the evening at his club; and that I was not alone! Next morning, when he returned home, the house looked just as usual.

“‘Anything occurred during my absence?’ he inquired as usual.

“‘It was all I could do to keep from laughing.

“‘No, love! there was not a soul here the whole day!’”

Hell is naturally full of loose characters; both of those who openly ply their trade, and those who are outwardly respectable individuals. The first-named class swarm on the outskirts of inhabited places, where they follow their old pursuits. But the latter occupy their places in society, in order to cater for scandal, a matter of the last importance in Hell. I mean thereby that they not only may thus be able to recount their own scandalous histories, but constantly be giving rise to new ones of the most varied and attractive character.

Who does not recall the history of Mars and Venus in Vulcan’s net? It is acted over and over again every day. But the shame

which these women made light of before, now becomes their constant torment. For modesty and respectability are now the sole objects of their ambition. But all in vain ! They are a defenceless prey to vice under its numerous and indefinite forms.

I do not intend to moralize—it would not do in Hell ; but I must draw your attention for a moment to the essential difference that exists between these two classes of women. And it does not at all redound to the credit of those who in the world escaped the opprobrious epithet, and the disgrace attached to it. Want and wretchedness for the most part made the others what they are ; they fell victims to a hard and cruel necessity. The first but followed the bent of their inclinations. There was nothing to compel them to follow their calling ; on the contrary, everything to render it expedient for them to remain virtuous. It is, therefore, a natural consequence that they are under far worse conditions in Hell than the others.

The above tale drew forth universal applause from the company ; everybody began to whisper and titter, while a diabolical expression of joy gleamed forth from all eyes. All but the narrator herself were in excellent spirits ; for no sooner had she finished her tale than she be-

came fully aware that she had made a great fool of herself. She was nearly dying from chagrin.

But in order to fill up the uncomfortable pause that ensued, she asked her next neighbour :

“Have you ever been in Naples, my dear ? and did you know the Princess Z—— ?”

“Oh, yes ! I had that honour,” was the peevish answer. “Perhaps I knew more of her than anybody else. For when I and my husband were staying in Naples in 18—, the only apartments we could obtain were in the best floor of the Palazzo Z——.”

“These Italian princely families, by the way, are so wretchedly off that they actually have not the means requisite to enable them to occupy their ancestral palaces. The prince and his family lived upstairs, just as if they had been our lodgers. Under these circumstances, therefore, I had every opportunity of being initiated into the domestic economy of princely households. What misery gilded over ! To the eye everything was as excellent as it was possible to imagine. The *suites* of apartments—at least, those that were open to view—were furnished in the old-fashioned style, and still bore traces of their former magnificence ; but here and there, where it had been necessary to patch up the old splendour, the effect was far from happy. The antechamber and vesti-

bule were full of lacqueys, who, except for the livery they had on their backs, received neither wages nor board. They lived on what they could manage to squeeze out of the visitors who came to see the prince, *i buono mano*, that is, in drink money. In the courtyard below might be seen an equipage decorated with the princely arms, and resplendent with gilt and tassels, with a pair of blood horses, which still proudly pawed the ground. It was never taken out without three liveried servants hanging on behind. So much for the outside!

"But the interior, my dear friends! A meaner, or a stingier household cannot be conceived. Only two confidential domestics had access to them—an old servant and an aged housekeeper, both devoted to the service of the princess. Of course, it was a secret from the world at large, but not from me. The old servant was steward over an empty house; the aged housekeeper, cook in an establishment where there was nothing to do except to make coffee or chocolate. At meal times all the doors were locked. Then the confidential servant sneaked down the backstairs into the town, and quickly returned, followed by a man from the commonest *trattori*, bearing a basket which contained some food of the very simplest description. A few *fogliettos*

of the wine of the country and a little fruit constituted the meal, which was eaten without any regard to ceremony. Indeed eating and drinking were looked on as a sort of necessary evil, and not by any means as an enjoyment. Then the doors were thrown wide open once more, and the family were again visible, either at home or in the theatre. If it happened to be one of the evenings on which they were 'at home,' the princess and her daughter displayed themselves in the only two dresses of which their wardrobe consisted. It cost them but little to entertain; there was only ice and lemonade handed about; and the guests brought their conversation with them, the principal ingredient in the evening's entertainment.

"The prince occupied some honourable but ill-paid post, and was a man of some influence. It was said that he was open to a bribe through his chamberlain, and that even the smallest sums would not be refused. The chamberlain received them, and then shared them with his master according to an arranged tariff. Of course, it was an unequal division; the lion's share and the jackal's!"

The tale ought to have been brought to a close here; the lady felt it herself, but could not stop; for the company were beginning to exchange glances and make secret signs to one

another. But after a moment's indecision the interesting creature went on:

"Yes! I soon learnt by experience how matters were.

"One day I was going with my husband through one of the by-streets, in which there was a prison. Unfortunately I happened to look up as we passed it. Behind the barred windows were several disgusting-looking objects, who amused themselves in making fun of the by-passers, or in begging for alms. It was a repulsive sight! But it was destined to prove more than repulsive to me. For amongst the wretches there was one face which I knew too well, and which recognised me, as was plain from the bold, domineering look with which his eyes met mine. I shuddered as if I had been stung; my knees refused to sustain their burden; and it was only with the greatest difficulty that my husband succeeded in getting me past the horrible place.

"Next day a dirty piece of paper was secretly handed to me, containing the following words:

" 'I am in prison on suspicion of theft.—*Carcere delle grotte*.—Save me, or you are lost!'

"It needed no signature. I knew it was

Francesco Patelli, our courier from olden days. I had thought him dead, or else far, far away.

“Ten years previously I had visited Naples for the first time in my life, not as the wife of a distinguished and rich gentleman, but as lady’s maid to his wealthy mother.

“A French maid, you know, of the first class is always of some importance. As lady’s-maid I was worth my weight in gold; and in respect of beauty I put all the ladies to shame.

“Father and son both paid their attentions to me; and money and costly gifts were heaped in showers into my lap.

“But I was too prudent to allow myself to be caught; though it was a great amusement to me to excite their passions; for father and son were both brimming over with jealousy towards each other. It was very interesting! Indeed, the old man was nearly becoming imbecile from love, while the young man almost went raving mad. Thus I could twist them round my finger as I pleased.

“But what was to be done? The little game must come to an end sooner or later. I could not turn the old man to any account; but the young one—aye, there was the rub!

“I could very easily prevail on him to elope with me and make me his wife; but then the old man had it in his power to disinherit him.

If anything was to come of it, this contingency at least must be guarded against. So I made an appointment with the courier of the family, Francesco Patelli, in whose face I had long since read the rascal.

"I let myself be eloped with!

"Papa and the courier set off in pursuit. But there is an old saying, '*Festina lente.*' By some unfortunate and unforeseen accident the old gentleman departed this life; a little suspicion rested on the courier, but unattended with further consequences. And when we met afterwards at a place agreed upon, in order to give him his wages for the service he had rendered me, I was the young gentleman's bride, and joint-heir to the estate.

"But now . . . ! They were fearful words . . . 'Save me, or you are lost!'

"Something then must be done, and that quickly!

"I asked for a conference with the prince. The gallant gentleman did not make me wait long. On the bold supposition that what report said was true, I came to the point with all the delicacy and the *finesse* I was mistress of, and begged him to use his influence in procuring the release of one Francesco Patelli, who was an old servant of the family, but who now, poor fellow, was

pinning away in prison under the groundless suspicion of having been implicated in some highway robbery. Thereby, I added, the prince would gain another opportunity of showing to the world at large that in him humanity possessed one of its most noble champions.

“The prince was all smiles and compliments.

“‘If he was a champion of the human race,’ he gracefully expressed himself, ‘it was quite certain that I was one too.’

“He would take the matter into his serious consideration, he added; but, as he had so very much to do, perhaps it would be as well if I were to speak to his chamberlain about it, in order that he might remind him of it.

“Of course I acted on this piece of advice; and in order to refresh the worthy chamberlain’s memory the better, slipped a roll of notes into his hand. Whereupon he assured me that his memory was as trustworthy as gold itself; and that the prince, who was the best of masters, lived only to make himself of service to his friends.

“Two days later the prince had the pleasure to inform me that poor Francesco Patelli was released from prison.

“But for myself I had had quite enough of Naples!”

Here ended the tale.

Is it not true that queer things come to light here in Hell?

The company round the tea-table at all events were of that opinion; for seldom had they spent so pleasant an evening!

Reminiscences keep crowding on my mind. Things I had done and quite forgotten now stand before me in lifelike reality, in outlines as fresh as if I had slept but one night on them; and Aunt Betty plays a prominent part in the recollections of my childhood.

When I think of what she was to me when but a little child, it seems so real that the tears come into my eyes. Not that they really do come there. Yet it was not I myself especially that reaped the fruits of her self-denial, but my father, and for his sake my mother; still it extended itself to all who lived with her. She made herself everybody's servant. Many a time would she sit up at night in order that the poor girls might go to bed; she, too, it was who awoke them in the morning, in order that they might lie in bed as long as possible. In the long winter evenings she would be at the pains of teaching their clumsy fingers all sorts of neat and useful needlework; she looked after their clothes, cut out patterns for them,

and gave them all sorts of valuable hints and advice, that they might look tidy and nicely dressed, and not like poor girls. Indeed, she was very nearly undertaking to teach the coachman to read ; but my father interposed, and one of the clerks relieved her of that duty.

Though of a weakly constitution, she could undergo almost any exertion, bear any fatigue. The only thing that ever put her out of humour was when any one insisted on her taking care of herself. It seemed to her to be the most unreasonable thing in the world.

“I,” she would say, with an air as if she had thrown herself into the furthest corner of the room, “should I . . . ?”

Anything was good enough for her. And she had a wonderful command over herself. When my mother, for instance, had been hard upon her, and she had retired to her own room to have a good cry, she would shortly come out again with the same gentle face as ever, without a trace of sorrow or vexation on it.

And when she was suffering, or depressed in spirits, and came into my father’s room, she always had some humorous remark on her lips, some joke or other to drive away his sad thoughts. Certainly her sanguine temperament stood her in good need here ; still, it was more

than a natural power that she displayed, it was her spirit that was so strong within her. Affection was instinctive to her. Odd as she was at times, strange as her whims might be, curious as her manners, yet somehow love always made her hit on the right thing. It was impossible for any person to be a better Christian, more pious than she was. Her education had been sadly neglected; she was very ignorant. Had any one questioned her on the simplest matters respecting her faith, she would have displayed the greatest ignorance. But not the less was she a rare Christian. Though great her defects, though her failings were many, yet love streamed through them all, and brought everything in order.

At her own request her room was below, situated between my father's study and the household offices. It was the only room in the whole house she could use, she said. It was clear that she must have an eye to the kitchen; but it seemed to her to be quite as necessary to see after my father. She was always afraid lest anything should happen to him, if he were out of her sight even for a single moment.

It was a plainly furnished room, but neat to a degree. Tidiness was visible everywhere, and everything had its appointed place, and

could not possibly have been found in any other. One peculiarity in the decoration of the room was the number of large and small objects of the most varied kind that were ranged round it. The furniture presented as many flat surfaces as was possible, and all of these were fully occupied. And here my aunt's odd tastes and fancies were apparent. Not only was there a confused display of natural and artificial productions all jumbled up together, but there were things which apparently were not worth the trouble of picking up out of the gutter. But my aunt knew what she was about. They were so many mementos; and by going through them it was easy to follow out the history of her life from beginning to end. Of this I early got a faint idea, and ever after regarded her motley collection not only with a deep interest, but with a certain degree of reverence. There was many a strange history attached to them. Not surprising, then, that they set my childish imagination to work, as I looked at this, now at that, wondering all the while what history might be connected therewith. Ah! many a reverie have I fallen into while contemplating them.

Aunt Betty held fashion in thorough contempt, and used to go about very simply

dressed. But though simple to a degree, nothing could be tidier or neater than her attire. She had ample means to dress differently, and she took care to let one know it at times.

"It is not for that," she would say. "I could dress as fine as any lady, if I liked."

And she spoke the truth here.

She liked to receive a little present now and then, not for the intrinsic value of the gift, but for the attention it evinced on the donor's part. Naturally, she liked to be esteemed by those for whom she sacrificed herself; so she got at one time from my father, at another from my mother, all sorts of pretty presents, especially choice and fashionable materials for dresses. Gratefully and gladly she would accept them, have them made up, and then put them by. Thus she possessed a large stock of expensive dresses, shawls, and mantles; but it was little use she ever made of them. They would get out of fashion before she had ever worn them, but she took care that they should not get spoilt.

Sometimes when I went down to see her there would be a regular exhibition taking place. The bed, the chairs, and tables would all be covered with dresses, shawls, cloaks, furs, bonnets, &c. "They wanted airing." With a happy expression of face she would walk up

and down among them, try on first one, then another; run her fingers over the soft silk; or here would be a wrinkle to smoothen out; there a speck of dust to brush away, all the while in a state of ecstasy. At such times she was far removed from all that may be termed reality.

Sometimes I found her marching about among her treasures with an elegant bonnet on her head; a shawl or a pelerine thrown over her shoulders; a wondrous attire, in strange contrast to her usual simple dress. It was as if there was an enchantment about them. Evidently she was herself no longer; no longer poor Aunt Betty hidden away from the lovely world outside in a dark smoky kitchen, with an unpoetical little chamber adjoining, where, instead of receiving the honour and homage due to her, she sacrificed herself to the happiness of others, only to be known and inadequately appreciated by these few. But when the sun went down, they were all packed up once more, and Aunt Betty was again the old woman.

Once or twice, however, in the course of the year she would boldly venture a step further.

Then she would dress herself out in her very best, and for some hours would allow my father and the servants to admire her from top to toe. She did not like showing herself

to my mother, who, though ever exemplary in her manner towards her, still could not suppress an ironical smile when Aunt Betty came out in this manner. She was not *naïve*, or else not good-natured enough to enter into the spirit of such extraordinary exhibitions, as they might well be termed, although aunt was one of the most natural creatures in the world.

Yes, the transformation was complete! She was undoubtedly the lady, and a very distinguished one too. But though dressed out in the fashion of the day, she by no means belonged to the day, but rather to an age long, long gone by, quite different in chivalrous and poetic feelings to the present.

Her manners had more of the old Spanish about them than anything else I can compare them to, so lofty was her bearing, so gracious her smile, so punctilious her demeanour! In her Don Carlos of Spain would have recognised one of the most distinguished ladies of his day.

If on such occasions the sky happened to be quite cloudless, she might take it into her head to take a short trip into the town, and show herself to the public, when her peculiar costume and somewhat strange manner never failed to cause a certain degree of sensation. But she never seemed at all annoyed at it. What better

testimony can be adduced that she was herself no longer then? It was a sort of trance, a brief moment of intoxication, that passed off, however, as soon as she had returned home. Then all her finery was put away, and it was long before it saw the light of day again. Generally, she was quite contented to know that she possessed fine clothes worthy of a lady, and this consciousness was enough for her in this as in many other respects.

Aunt Betty had, moreover, a nice little collection of handsomely bound books in her room. Whenever she heard speak of an extremely good book she would buy it at once. Not that she ever read them; "she had no time for that," she would say; "but when I am old, my dear, I shall have something to amuse myself with, and then I will read them all."

One of her peculiarities was that she could never read anything without reading it aloud. "She could only understand what she could hear," she would say.

Poor aunt!

"When she got old she would read them!" Provided that by that time she had not forgotten how to read.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF an evening when it was getting dusk I was very fond of stealing down to Aunt Betty's little room, where I generally found her sunk in a reverie. She was never cross with me for disturbing her; she loved me too much for that. So she had to tell me stories, for which indeed she had a special gift. I am quite convinced that she made the greater portion of them up as she went on. There was no particular meaning in them, but they were always interesting. In all of them there was a high moral sense underlying them, original certainly, but yet at the same time so hearty and earnest that they could not fail to appeal to a *naïve* feeling like mine.

It was from my aunt that I received my first instruction in religion, of no dogmatic character, as may be supposed; on the contrary, she always followed a practical course. Ah! how ever could those impressions, so deep, so sweet, and so tender, ever fade away from my mind?

One evening we were sitting together by the window. It was getting dark, but the sky was clear, and the stars were shining with unusual lustre. The sight of them made a wonderful impression on my childish mind. Of course I had often seen them shining before, but when I recall the impression of that hour, it is just as if I had never seen the stars shine before that evening.

I wanted to know what the stars really were, and what was behind them. So my aunt explained to me "that up yonder was our Heavenly Father's dwelling, with its innumerable mansions in indescribable splendour. And I should go up there some day, if I had been a good and holy child on earth."

I thought this very beautiful; but it did not quite satisfy me. I wanted a more detailed description; I required an express answer to my questions.

Now, anybody else but Aunt Betty would very likely have been sorely puzzled, but her imaginative powers were far too rich to allow her to be at a loss. So she told me, that behind the stars was a spacious and magnificent hall, where God the Father sat on the throne of His majesty, with His Son on His right hand. In the middle of the hall was a Christmas-tree, higher than

the highest mountain on the earth, covered all over from top to bottom with burning lamps and costly presents. And round about the Christmas-tree good and holy children danced, who had now become angels and God's own children; so joyful and happy were they! And while they were dancing round the tree, they sang praises to the honour and glory of God, and no one could possibly form an idea how lovely it was. As often as they stopped to rest themselves a while, all kinds of beautiful presents were given to them, and though this constantly took place, yet the tree was always covered with gifts.

I was quite satisfied!

"But the stars?" I inquired; "what are they?"

"I will tell you," answered my aunt.

"Round the hall is a countless number of tiny peep-holes, and the bright light from the Christmas-tree beams through them. These are the stars! While the angel children are resting themselves, they amuse themselves by peeping through these tiny holes, in order to see how the children on earth are behaving; if they are good, obedient, and holy; for they are their own brothers and sisters, and they love them so dearly, and long after them so tenderly. So, whenever you look up at the

stars, you must think that behind each star there is an angel's eye, which is looking down at you. And the star twinkles just in the same way as when one winks with the eye. So, if you do not wish the angels to shed tears over you, you must be such a very good boy ; father's, mother's, and my own darling ! ”

Her tale affected me to such a degree that I threw myself on her bosom, and burst into tears ; and it was some little time before I had regained my usual composure and curiosity. But presently I had a new question to put.

“ But, dear aunty, where do the naughty children go to ? ”

Aunt Betty was nearly getting into a fix now. I do not mean to say that she was too prudent, but that she was too tender-hearted, to tell me about Hell and its terrors ; so she only answered :

“ The naughty children go to a dark place, far, far away from God the Father and His dear Son ! ”

But I wanted to know all the particulars, and she was therefore obliged to furnish me with them.

“ Well,” she began, “ then I will tell you.

“ The naughty children sit cooped up in a miserable back room, where the fire has gone out ; and they shiver so with cold, that their

teeth chatter again in their heads. The light, too, has gone out, so they are obliged to sit in the dark, and are so frightened. They cry and sob, and beat themselves with all their might ; but there is no one—no, not one—to hear them.”

Her words made me tremble dreadfully.

“Oh, aunt, I am so frightened,” I said, in a low tone, as I nestled up to her.

“Look up at the stars, my child!” she answered, “and you will not be frightened then.”

And she took me up on her lap ; and I was afraid no longer. The stars twinkled so encouragingly and cheerfully to me, that I felt as if I was under their dear eyes and protection.

“I should so like to hear them sing!” I said, presently.

“Aunty, dear, how does it sound when the angels sing?”

“You shall hear, my darling,” answered my aunt, as she cleared her throat.

And with a gentle, clear, and soft voice she began to sing one of her favourite hymns. Oh ! it sounded so lovely in the quiet evening ; there was something so childlike in those soft, sweet notes that went to my heart, as I kept my eyes steadily fixed on the stars, that the illusion was complete. It was so dark that I could not see her face, but I could see the stars, and they

twinkled to me. It was only for a moment ; but for a brief while my eyes had taken my hearing up with them, and there was no longer any earth for me, but only Heaven ; for the sounds seemed to come down from above, and an indescribable feeling of awe filled my heart. Involuntarily I folded my hands, as she had taught me, and unconsciously winked with my eyes back again to the stars, as a sign that the understanding between us was mutual, and that I could hear them.

When the song had ceased, and I had come to myself once more, I felt myself to be so mean and poor. But I dreamed the whole night through about the Christmas-tree in Heaven, and the songs of the angels.

Many an evening afterwards we sat together again ; aunt singing to me, and I gazing up at the stars. I quickly caught the air, and joined in with her. I think aunt was just as much a child then as I was. We were both of us quite beside ourselves while singing our angel songs to the honour and praise of God ; for it seemed as if we were drawn up by an inward longing for that which was behind the stars.

One evening—but it must have been at a later period—my aunt told me the history of the rich man and Lazarus : I call it a history,

and not a parable ; for of all real things there is nothing more real than this. When I first heard it, too, it was not as a parable, but as a plain, simple narrative. And the effect was surprising ! True enough I envied the poor man his place in Abraham's bosom ; but the rich man in torments, without a drop of water to slake his thirst, excited my sincerest sympathy. I was painfully moved. Sobbing, I hid my face in aunt's bosom, and was almost beside myself with grief.

"The poor rich man ! What he must have suffered ! And how cruel they were to him !"

My aunt felt quite as miserable as I did. Truly, she had calculated on making a deep impression on me, but not one of that sort ; so she tried all in her power to soothe me.

"My child, do not take it to heart so ! I have good reasons for believing that Father Abraham made a great mistake, when he refused to give the rich man a mere drop of cold water. The Lord can never approve of that, and if I know him right, Father Abraham will be taken to task for it. If so poor a thing as a single drop of water were able to soothe the rich man, surely God would not refuse it. He who spared not His own blood, will He be so exact about a drop of water ? And, besides, did you not notice how the rich man, even in the midst of torments, thought upon his poor

brothers? God will never forget that! Brotherly love cannot but touch God's heart, even though the poor fellow were in Hell!"

It was thus she consoled me. No doubt she would willingly, and in perfect good faith, have put even a more comforting interpretation upon it, in order to solace my grief and dry my tears.

Poor Aunt Betty! she was no theologian. There was nothing real to her mind, except God's fatherly compassion; that overflowed like her own, on all sides.

And yet, why call her poor? It is I who am poor; though enriched with a fuller experience—in Hell!

These reminiscences of my childhood, even if they were ever so torturing, would absorb my thoughts. But torturing, properly speaking, they are not; full of pain, it is true, but not of torture. I do not know whether you can realize the distinction.

There is then something sweet in these reminiscences even in Hell. As on the one hand the pain is more acute,—just as the sweet in food or drink produces acidity,—so on the other, the torture, to a certain extent, is done away with. But this refers only to the recollections of childhood. If I let my thoughts glide on, though here and there a trace of sweetness may still be perceptible, it has no

longer any power over the bitterness of my remorse, and I become a prey to tormenting anguish.

Thus, I have a lively recollection of the sermon that was preached immediately before I attended my first communion. It made a deep, aye, a piercing impression upon me. How ever time, and that so short too, could quite eradicate it, I cannot even now make out!

It was from one of the worthiest ministers of our Church that I received the last religious instruction, preparatory to that holy rite.

A wild, carnal nature had already begun to assert its sway over me; but he knew how to awe me, and to rivet my thoughts. Only a look, and I was all attention; only a word, and I listened eagerly. He possessed not only the power of captivating, but of stirring one up.

His text was taken from the following words: "*Be ye reconciled to God.*" How could I ever forget them? But I did forget them entirely. Now they recur to my mind, and constantly haunt my thoughts. Involuntarily I am constrained to say to myself, "Be reconciled to God. . . . Oh, be reconciled to God!" But no sooner have they recurred to my mind, than some remorseful recollection forces its way into my heart, and drives them out again.

I recollect every single word of his sermon from beginning to end. I recollect it, but cannot give utterance to it. There is a vast difference. Neither does it prove to be the slightest benefit to me that I can recollect it; it conduces neither to my edification nor consolation, to say nothing of my peace of mind. I can recall the words, but cannot convey a single one of them to my heart. It is just as if they were hollow; or, perhaps, it is I who am hollow and empty, whom no power can fill. I know that they are God's words, that salvation and redemption are contained in them; but they pass by me. I am the rich man, pining after a drop of water; but it is denied me. I exert myself to the utmost to try and grasp if only the very smallest portion of that which hovers before me, and which once I knew so well; but all my efforts are in vain. I often fancy I am very near laying hold of it; but the next instant it is gone again. I can hold nothing firmly in my grasp. It is this unavailing, this hopeless struggle, that we have to renew again and again, that constitutes one of our greatest sufferings—aye, I might say the greatest of all.

You will now be able to understand how it is I have been able to discourse about the things belonging to the kingdom of God, and yet remain comfortless, hopeless, the prey of

despair; of the Saviour, of the Crucified, of contrition, repentance, and faith.

Like everything else in Hell, this too is hollow, vain. I have but the form; of the reality I have no conception. I know that there is a Saviour, and that He is God's Son, but I stand in no relationship to Him whatever. I cannot conceive Him; I do not even know His name. I condemn, detest myself as cordially as it is possible to do; so far I repent. But I know nothing of a fruitful repentance; mine, alas! is a tearless one.

And, finally, to speak of faith. Yes, I have faith too; but it is an empty, heartless idea, that nowhere can find a home. The devils believe also; they are obliged to do so; but they tremble!

"Be reconciled to God." How deeply those words touched me once! I thought then there was nothing worth living for except to be reconciled to God; and then to die in order to go to Him, and be with Him in His heavenly kingdom. Again the stars twinkled to me in confidence, and I forgot all the world. Oh what hallowed, what noble determinations I formed in that hour of elevation! My first admission to the altar had become an entrance upon the road to Heaven. But quickly I turned aside from it, ere I was scarce even outside the church door.

And now—I am in Hell!

“Be reconciled to God.”

Again and again those words echo in my heart; not though as if they proceeded from Heaven, but as if they issued from the depths of Hell, accompanied with the most bitter, cruel scoffing.

“Be reconciled to God.”

Ah! no reconciliation is possible now.

When I am at a loss what to do with myself I repair to the public promenade. Of course we have one, and that too of a very remarkable kind. Hyde Park, the Champs Elysées, Unter den Linden, Corso, Prado, are each and all excellent in themselves, but not to be compared with our promenade. Though in point of elegance there may be no perceptible difference between them, yet on that very account the variety, the motley group, the numbers, render the distinction striking to a degree. There, for instance, only one fashion is represented at a time; here, on the other hand, a thousand different fashions may be seen at one and the same instant; the fashions of centuries past. So that it affords a spectacle, so varied, so animated, and let me add so ridiculous, that it is quite unique.

Here the greatest contradictions meet, and reciprocally help to make each other the more prominent. Folly appears with a reality so striking that the spectator must perforce burst

out laughing, however miserable he may feel. On one side you may see people parading about wrapped up to their very chins; on the other, going about half naked; here, with a balloon-like circumference; there, looking like a stick. Here again tightly laced and bandaged up; and there, almost tumbling to pieces. Yonder a pair of breeches of fabulous dimensions, here a pair fitting as tight as a second skin. Here a romantic *perruque*, or a towering *toupet*, a master-piece of art; here again a head almost bald, or a profusion of curls arranged without any attention to natural grace. And so on, *ad infinitum*.

Crinolines, whalebone petticoats, waistcoats reaching down to the knees, skirts down to the heels, long waists, and short waists; pig-tails, and all little sorts of tubs or castles under the name of hats or bonnets; powder, rouge, beauty patches, &c., who could enumerate them all?

It is a regular Vanity Fair!

All seem striving in the most different and ridiculous ways to make each other appear at variance with their rank. In the world such foolishness was little, if at all, visible; for only one fashion reigned at a time, and that of course was excellent beyond compare. But here it is forcibly apparent, where all fashion

meet, and frequently in the most contradictory forms.

It is inconceivable how human beings could ever have made such owls of themselves, have hit upon such apish tricks! One blushes for them. Aye! and they blush too; for themselves now, these heroes and heroines of fashion! And though they strut up and down, passing and repassing each other with derisive looks of scorn, attired in their fools' dresses, they experience no real pleasure. The satisfaction they feel is but an illusion hidden up in their garments; they are the very reverse of feeling comfortable. For they are perfectly aware of their own wretchedness; they know full well that while they are scoffing at others, they too are exposing themselves to ridicule. But the part they play is compulsory; and is the more painful, as the dress of vanity they wear, gorgeous and grand though it be, cannot even hide their nakedness. People can see through their garments, how many soever they may have on. It is true nakedness is the universal law in Hell; all come under its sway; but there is a vast difference between being naked, and publicly exposing one's nakedness to view, especially when all the while one feels convinced that he is an object of ridicule on account of an exaggerated style of dress.

Oh, fops and dandies ! if you could only catch just one glimpse of such a scene, I believe you would be entirely cured.

Strange enough, and yet after all not so strange, that the generality of people are of the opinion that everything comprehended under the word vanity, under which denomination of course fashion is included, is not a sin, but at best can be considered only as an amiable, a pardonable weakness.

Well, let us suppose then that vanity perhaps in itself is no fault. I say perhaps. But however it be twisted and turned it cannot but lead to a fault, and to moral depravity. The mind thereby becomes developed in a totally false direction, and the current of life follows a perverted channel. The realities of life fade away as if shrouded in a mist, and existence becomes a lie, and devoid of fruit. Let vanity only once assert its sway, and then with even the best will in the world one is unable to addict one's self to any serious pursuit ; everything becomes folly and nonsense. And when at last such an one leaves the world, he will have done nothing, though there will be thousands of things he will have left undone, or have done badly.

Who, then, dare to repeat that vanity is unattended with guilt, or with danger ?

I glance back over my past life. Oh ! how

clear it all seems to me now ; how prudent I would be if I could only live it over again !

There is a very general opinion in the world that a man must be an exceedingly wicked one to find himself in Hell. But let me tell you, you shortsighted ones, that it is inconceivable how little can send a person there, when life comes to a close without the Saviour having been found. Without Him the soul cannot endure the least burden ; but with Him, aye with Him, though pressed down under a mountain load of sin, it can raise itself and soar up to Heaven.

Do you know the Saviour ? I ask as one who knows Him no longer.

I should like to tell you a little tale I once heard somewhere or other in Italy ; and yet I should think twice before doing so, for there are subjects which it does not do to joke about, least of all in Hell.

Still it might do you good to hear it, and I do not think it can do me any harm to tell it. Not that I entertain any fear about the matter, but only an instinctive feeling of shyness or aversion, or whatever you may please to term it.

Well, I will conquer that. It is but a romance ; a kind of burlesque popular tradition ; but there is a deep, an earnest truth contained in it.

God had predetermined from all eternity to create man. The Devil also knew from the beginning that such was God's purpose. And God accomplished His design; He created man, and it cost Him no trouble at all to furnish him with every perfection; for He simply created him after His own image. On the other hand, it caused the Devil the severest exertions to try and find out how he could best ruin this lovely and precious creation of the Almighty.

"Now I have it," said Lucifer to his grandmother, who was sitting in a corner of Hell, knitting. She was knitting snares, and plots, and springes; of course only for her own pleasure, for she could live well enough without doing that. "Now I have it: I will implant an evil desire in man's mind, so that he will set his heart on what is forbidden, and will find pleasure in disobedience. I will make him a wrong-doer; I will!"

"Very good, little son; very good!" mumbled his old grandmother; "but it will not do. Desire can be kept in check, and the Lord God is strong enough to do that."

"The deuce!" said the Devil. "Well, I must think a little more over it." And he retired into the deepest abyss in Hell; he called it his study. There he sat for a thousand

years; his chin resting on his hand, and his glowing eyes incessantly staring out straight before him. He did not notice how time was passing.

"Now I have it," he exclaimed, when at the end of the thousand years he came out from his den. "I will fill man's soul with self-love and self-will. I will blind him, so that he shall only be able to look at what concerns himself. I will make a villain of him, great or small, according to circumstances."

"Very good, my boy; very good, indeed," answered his grandmother. But at that moment she dropped a stitch. "Oh, hold me a brand. . . . Soh, now I have got it. Very good, my boy; but it will not do. Self-love and self-will can be rooted out, and the Lord God is able to do that."

"Confound it," said Lucifer; "then I must try again. Now, *pazienza*, what is to be is to be."

And off he went again to hide himself up in his den.

After the lapse of another thousand years he again emerged, and found his grandmother exactly on the same spot as before, knitting away, and buried in deep thought. She was so old that a thousand years made no difference in her; though perhaps she was just a little

trifle more bent, and the claws on her fingers had grown just a tiny bit longer.

"Now I have it," said the Devil, with a conceited air of triumph. "I will take up my abode in man's heart, and will turn everything upside down within him. His nature, and his inclinations, shall be entirely perverted. He shall take falsehood to be truth, vice to be virtue, ignominy to be honour. In a word, I will make him a fool."

"It won't do, my lad; it won't do," answered his grandmother, as she finished a row, and bit off the thread with the only tooth she had remaining. "There is more than that needed, far more than that. What has once been overturned, can be placed up again; the crooked can be made straight; and the Lord God is able to do it."

"I shall soon get tired of it," growled the Devil. "This intense studying tells upon one. But it would be foolish to give up half-way." And so he went off once more to his den.

Again a thousand years passed, without the almanac, and without anybody knowing what had become of them. Nothing is better than when time passes with as little fuss as possible.

When the Devil returned he really did look fagged. His grandmother was seated

in her old place ; but this time, contrary to custom, her hands were on her lap. Evidently she had been longing after her son. Wit or fool, she had only him.

“ Now, at last, I have it ! ” exclaimed Lucifer. “ I will make vanity man’s second nature. Ape-like, he shall become enamoured of himself, and do all sorts of apish tricks. I will, to speak plainly, make him a fool. Man shall become the ridicule and laughing-stock of his brother man.”

“ Ho, ho ! you have hit it there, my boy,” whined out the old woman, as joy gleamed out of her red, bleared eyes. “ The others were good, too ; brilliantly conceived ; but they had one failing, they were not innocent enough. However covetous, however perverted man might become, he would constantly feel that there was something amiss ; he would lose confidence in himself, and events would teach him caution. Remember conscience ! And one can never tell what God in His boundless love may please to do for the miserable race.

“ But with vanity it is quite a different matter. It is a grand discovery. Your part in the world will be a great one, my son. Everything connected with it is so apparently innocent, so unlikely to cause suspicion ; for what can be more innocent apparently than

to wile away the time, to amuse one's self, to be joyful amongst the joyous, beautiful amongst the lovely, to wear fine clothes, to aim after graceful and *distingué* manners, to have one's natural and acquired accomplishments duly appreciated? Mankind will give itself completely up to vanity; through vanity, lust, self-will and folly will gain the dominion; and in perfect innocence they will travel along the high road to Hell. True enough, the Lord God can do what He pleases; there is no doubt of that. But I was not born yesterday, and for my part I cannot imagine how God ever can interpose to arrest the course of the vain, as with the easiest and securest conscience they go fooling along the road to Hell."

The old woman had worked herself up into such a pitch of excitement that she had grown quite eloquent. She shook in her seat, and her joints rattled, so withered was she; and her skin, which seemed of all colours, hung on her in loose folds.

"I'm proud of you, my lad!" she resumed. "It is only right that I should do my part in furthering such an excellent plan. When I change my skin I'll make it look so fine for you; it will be so beautiful and soft, and of such a lovely colour, that it will take every

fool's fancy. It will be your business then to force it into the hands of mankind. It will be easy enough to do so. With his apish nature man will dress himself up in anything, provided it be only singular and rather brilliant. Then you will see, Diavolino, what beautiful things will come of it. They will call it the Fashion ; it will be looked on as the most harmless, the most innocent, thing in the world. Ha ! ha ! ha ! and it will be neither more nor less after all than my old discarded hide. But it will be a powerful means of nurturing vanity and of making life result in nothingness. Then the fool will first appear in human nature in a thousand fantastic and ever-varying forms. But I must go and take a little exercise now, that my skin may slip off all the easier. One gets quite stunted from sitting still so long."

Lucifer was in ecstasies.

" *Per Baccho !*" he shrieked. " Soh ! at last then all is right. God may create His man now whenever He pleases !"

Thereupon he took his old grandmother up on his back, and danced up and down Hell. It tickled her fancy to such a degree, that she nearly split herself with laughing.

" Mind my skin !" she cried ; " my boy, mind my skin !"

CHAPTER IX.

PERHAPS you will be surprised to hear me speak of Literature in Hell. A few explanatory remarks, however, will suffice to remove your astonishment. It is simply thus: As every specific evil finds its way down to Hell, so also does everything that is of an immoral tendency, or exceedingly foolish, descend here, whether it be in a written or printed form. First come the works themselves, then their authors. Thus you see, literature cannot by any means be said to be poorly represented here; and as may be supposed, it is tolerably one-sided.

Light literature is very fully represented by a number of trashy novels. All civilized countries and peoples have contributed towards it, though in very different proportions. Some are distinguished by the quantity, others by the quality, of their contributions. The last-named may be divided into two classes—schools they cannot properly be termed—the

piquant, and the racy. Both have their special representatives. I mention no names; but doubtless it will be an agreeable surprise to some authors who are still living to hear how extensively their talents are appreciated, as they not only write for the world, but also for Hell. As far as regards any remuneration from this latter place, the authors must be content to waive their claim, at least for the present, till they come here themselves. Then doubtless matters will be satisfactorily arranged.

This light literature is in as great demand here as it was in the world. There are those, indeed, who, so to speak, live on nothing else. But still that soul has not yet been found that has received any edification from it. It was little enough in the world, forsooth, but here it is much less. It is a natural consequence. In the world an excited imagination and inflamed desires could be appeased after a fashion, but there is no such thing possible here.

Neither is there any lack of theological works, critical, dogmatical, or homiletical.

In casuistry, too, we are well supplied; but it forms a special branch of science by itself. The olden time is mainly represented by a huge mass of priestly lies, gradually brought into a system; of all kinds of fanatical fabri-

cations and fantasies on one given theme—Religion. The age of Voltaire and of the Encyclopædists is the period when they reached their zenith; but a fresh impulse was imparted by Kant and his disciples. Regarded in a theological point of view from Hell, the French Revolution is neither more nor less than a new Messiah-birth; but how different from that first birth at Bethlehem! For the rest, all ages have added diverse contributions.

Of late some critical historical works, under the title, “. . . of Nazareth's Life,” have awakened extraordinary interest. Ah, look at the vacant space above! A name should stand there, but I am as little able to write it, as I am to pronounce it. My hand glides over the paper, but the name escapes me. In all these writings He, whom I can name no more, is only represented to be crucified afresh. From this you will be able to form a tolerably clear notion of our theological literature. It presents an admirable apparatus to any one who wishes to study himself into becoming a rank infidel!

But even in Hell one may get on the wrong track; even here there is a something worse to be dreaded. I never was a theologian, and never shall be one in this place!

Of course, in addition to these we possess a number of works by infidel writers, which have either been burnt, or not burnt; by puffed-up, perverted, crack-brained fanatics; by false prophets of all kinds, who have tried in different ways to make a capital out of religion. As novelties, forsooth, these writings readily command a certain degree of silly attention. But it is seldom long before the author comes here himself. Then the matter is solved in a very lamentable, or rather, let me say, in a manner, with regard to circumstances in Hell, which is extremely exhilarating; and the new theology and doctrine of salvation is confined to a certain corner of Hell, where its disciples eke out an existence very different to the lofty ideas they had formed.

Philosophical treatises are not so abundant. Philosophers on the whole must be regarded as very harmless people. Either they are really wise, and therefore good and pious; or else they have lapsed into a quiet, perfectly harmless kind of madness. Only, therefore, where a domineering spirit pervades their works, do we see anything of them. Thus we have not so few interesting attempts, made in a room eighteen feet square, not only to measure the world, but the whole of existence; to bring the entire creation into a system for

time and eternity; and with a pinch of snuff, or a snap of the finger, to solve the riddle of life.

I allude to the juridical profession only *en passant*, and as by way of parenthesis. If I were not to mention it, it would seem as if I held it in contempt, and I should be sorry even in Hell to have any disagreeables with the lawyers.

The fact simply is, that, however great my respect is for jurisdiction, I am totally unable to appreciate it: a deficiency on my part, doubtless. "*Corpus juris*," to my mind, is a tangled net of enormous dimensions!

The works of the Rabulists are ranged in long dust-covered rows. What the Rabulists are was never quite clear to me; but I suppose they are to jurisdiction what the Encyclopædists were to theology.

Works of sophistry are only alluded to to enable me to say that they are remarkable both for their refinement, and for their grossness; which of the two elements preponderates I am quite at a loss to decide.

As a matter of course, one load of shameful law-suits succeeds the other, and the papers swell into mountainous heaps. It is truly wonderful how ever the world had eyes to wade through them all. They compose one vast dung-hill; but that soil does not exist which

it is fitted to manure. There is scarce a single parish in the world but has its Aceldama !

With regard to the reviewer's profession, we have all kinds of abominable reviews, productions of ignorance, spite, thoughtless love of mischief, or pure malice. It is a well known fact that reviewers are a peculiar race of people, in whom there is but little of what is human, because nothing is so remote from their nature as humanity. Some people maintain that a reviewer must needs be a misanthrope in order to write a good critique. But that is saying rather too much. Others are doubtless nearer the mark when they assert that there is a great deal of cynicism about them ; for certainly reviewers are sarcastic, greedy, and sordid to a degree.

When I was alive I formed my own opinion about this class of people, but I will by no means insist that it was absolutely the right one. But I still maintain that reviewers may be divided into two principal classes ; the one consisting of those who are competent to criticise, but who take no pleasure in it, in fact, would rather not do it. In the world one seldom sees anything from their pen ; here, never.

The other class comprises those who, though quite incompetent, yet, in the Devil's name, will write reviews. These flood the world with their

productions ; and, either by violence or fraud, sway public opinion. Hell teems with them !

This latter class can again be subdivided into two branches : professional reviewers, and *amateur* reviewers.

The first mostly consists of those who have themselves attempted literature, but have signally failed in their attempts, and now feel themselves called upon to drag as many as possible into the same dirty and pitiable condition they are in themselves, omitting no opportunity, despising no means, wherewith to accomplish their object. The significant expression "to run a person down," a scientific one by the way, is said to have originated with them. Criticism has become their handicraft ; but the bread they eat is sour and bitter. They only live, only breathe to discover faults ; and, when these are not to be found, to invent them. Their whole life is spent in accumulating gall.

These reviewers are the most active fellows imaginable. I once heard it said, that the best ratting-cat was a rat itself, that had once tasted rat's flesh. If this be true, the same remark may readily be applied to the reviewers. Once let them conceive a taste for authorship, and they become the deadliest foes a poor author can have. I have a suspicion that Cerberus,

for a time, was nothing but a reviewer, who had written or barked in three papers.

We have a goodly number of professional reviewers. We avoid them as if they were mad dogs, for they are as snappish as ever, and form one of the worst plagues in Hell. Not unfrequently they evince the most evident symptoms, not of hydrophobia, but of *ink-phobia*, so much so that in some places they have been muzzled.

The other sub-division consists of young persons, not devoid of wit, nor deficient in talents, but terribly green; in fact, just liberated from school discipline. They want something out of the way to cool their young blood in, and so take to writing reviews for some journal or magazine. They do not mean any harm by it; it is merely an excellent method for them to show that they are justified in wearing a hat, and to forget that only a year ago they were schoolboys. They swing themselves up into the *cathedra* with an air almost divine, enveloped, of course, in clouds, and belch forth their incontrovertible knowledge. I repeat that these fine young fellows do not mean any harm; it is seldom that they confine themselves to the subject in hand, but aim only at writing pleasantly; at making a few witty remarks, and at getting an opportunity

of appearing in Olympian glory. How it fares with the poor author, whether he is living or dead, is a matter of total indifference to them ; they use him but as a stepping-stone under their feet, whereby they may be able to soar aloft into indefinite and airy heights.

One might almost be tempted to suppose that malicious reviewers in Hell are ranked in the same catalogue with murderers, that is, murderers in the spiritual meaning of the word, and that the first named are guilty of wilful murder, the latter only of unintentional homicide. But such is not the case. They stand in the same rank, or rather list, with unjust judges.

These reviews, then, after a fashion, make it possible for us to follow up the literature of the world. As soon as such a review arrives here, we know at once that some good, or, at all events, some harmless book has come out above. Of course we only get a distorted representation of it, only see the wrong side of what has been published. But we are used to it, everything goes on in this way.

Neither are the daily papers, especially the political ones, unrepresented ; namely, such as are used for a pecuniary speculation, or have sold themselves to serve some paltry party interest, and which do not hesitate, for lucre's

sake, to mislead public opinion, or to wheedle it. Above all, no sooner does any shameful article appear in any paper whatsoever, than it comes down straight to Hell, as neatly cut out as if it had been done by the scissors of a reviser. Parliamentary reports naturally afford a goodly supply. You may imagine that we get many a good speech to read of ministers and deputies: at one time a sheer mass of balderdash that makes one's ears tingle, at another, a pack of lies from first to last, so artfully woven together and glazed over, that one is almost induced to believe that there is actually some reality about it. So that we are able to follow up the occurrences of the day, though after a perverted fashion. It gives one really quite a wonderful impression to see first one, now another of one's good old acquaintances standing forth and delivering a hearty blow, and then disappearing as if he had never existed. It puts me in mind of the laughable custom I have seen in Holland and other countries, on Shrove Monday, viz. of knocking the cat out of the basket.

But you know all this as well as I do myself. What you do not, however, know as well as we do, is the multitude of dispatches, notes, circulars, confidential communications, which are exchanged between the cabinets of

the world, in the service of politics, for the greatest part for false and crafty ends; you know nothing about the protocols which are couched in the most obliging, and yet cautious and equivocal style, always speaking in the name of truth, of righteousness and of humanity, and yet having no more regard either for truth, righteousness, or for humanity, than for a sour herring, directly interest or any other evil passion comes into play.

The greater proportion of these political emanations never comes to the knowledge of the world, but goes down straight to Hell, little indeed to our edification. Of course we glean a great deal of remarkable information; but it only fills us with an impotent feeling of exasperation. I have always suspected it, but now am quite convinced, that the falsest, most cruel, and most ungodly being in the world, is your so-called high politician.

From this cursory sketch you will see that we are by no means deficient in point of reading here; and it will also have been impressed upon you, that out of all this dirty, poisonous rubbish, nothing of a refreshing or edifying nature can be found. It will not even suffice to wile away the passing moment. For the more we read, the more miserable do we feel, and the more numerous do our evil recollections

become. But we must seek dissipation ; we are, as it were, driven to it, though we know full well that it is nowhere any longer to be found.

It seldom or never occurred to me while I was in the world, that I had anything to be thankful for. Health, prosperous circumstances, I enjoyed as things that came as a matter of course. If ever I did bestow a single thought upon them, I attached but little weight to it. For I was never contented ; neither with life, with the world, nor yet with myself. I perceive and feel now what a rich blessing from on high lay in all these things, greater than tongue can express, and so much the greater, because they were quite unmerited. When I look back, and I am incessantly constrained to do so, for there is nothing to look forward to, save one thing, one terrible thing—Judgment and Damnation—I cannot but acknowledge that the benefits which are vouchsafed even on a single day in any man's life are countless. Life is so rich ! Doubtless there is a good deal of misery in the world. I myself have joined in crying, “ Ah ! ” and “ Woe ! ” over it. But the misery of the whole universe shrinks into nothingness when compared with that which I have recently undergone. Viewed from Hell, even the most miserable man on earth has infinitely much to

be thankful for. A human being's life, whatever it be, ought to be a life of gratitude. Even if out of all the good things of the world he has been able to retain naught but fresh air, light, and a crust of bread, he has unspeakably much to be thankful for. I see it all now when it is too late. Here there is nothing, alas! actually nothing to be thankful for. But you, who are still alive, you still have time to recognise the truth. Oh! lay these words of mine to your hearts; they are full of suffering and not devoid of love.

You will have noticed how incessantly I am harassed by evil thoughts, though of their extent you can form no idea. My actual misdeeds of course torture me; they lie like stones, hot, burning stones on my heart. It is not of them I am thinking. But every one of my actions in which I have only slightly erred, forces itself on my memory; each little untruth, falsehood, wrong, or merciless deed; every little act of deception; every little breach of faith and flaw, and so on to infinity. They fall on me with knives and scissors, cutting and piercing me to the very quick. Once they seemed so trivial, that I paid no heed to them, but quickly consigned them to oblivion. But they had their signification, and now they make it felt without mercy

They had quite vanished ; they existed no longer, each year laid a sod upon their graves. But still there was a hidden, an imperishable life within them, and now they all come back to me one by one. I remember them with a preciseness which is indescribably painful, and I am completely at their mercy.

Now that I am thinking of giving you one or two instances, in order that you should thoroughly understand me, they swarm by hundreds before me. I will select the first that comes.

Of late I have been constantly haunted by the piteous looks of a ragged little urchin. In whichever direction I turn, there he stands or rather lies before me, gazing at me with a pair of dark, sorrowful eyes. The story is as follows :

“One evening as I was walking outside the town, a little boy ran before me, and importuned me to buy something of him. But I did not want anything, and so pushed him aside time after time. Still he would not be repulsed, but would keep getting in my way ; till at last getting impatient, I took him by the arm and pushed him aside. I did not mean any harm to the lad, though I must acknowledge that at that moment my intentions were not quite what they ought to have been.

Doubtless, I could have got rid of him by gentler and better means, but to speak plainly I was annoyed, and would not be bothered. I suppose I must have used rather too much force, for the boy fell into the gutter, and began to weep bitterly, either because he had received some hurt, or because his wares had got broken. On turning round, a piteous glance from a pair of dark eyes, filled with pain and reproach met mine. I could very easily have repaired what I had done; but it never occurred to me to do so. I was too much taken up with myself, and I passed hastily on.

Now, I ask, would anybody call this a really evil deed? No; I am convinced they would not! But here in Hell one's feelings are nicer. And so after so long a lapse of time that little boy's face returns to my memory to add its contribution to the measure of my misery; truly but an infinite small portion of my entire wretchedness; but the instance cited is but one amongst hundreds of others that are constantly recurring to my thoughts.

And it is not only those things, those trifling things I have done amiss, that rise up and reproach me, but every evil word I have ever uttered comes back and makes me smart for it. Once they had issued forth from my mouth like poisoned shafts; like poisoned shafts they

come back to me and pierce my heart to its core.

Oh, then, weigh your words well, you who still have a living voice; for the evil one single careless word is capable of producing in the world is incalculable. If you will not treat others leniently, at least be merciful towards yourselves. For the ultimate goal of all your evil words is your own heart!

All kinds of conversations, long long since forgotten, are now remembered with an accuracy that is perfectly maddening. I can see now how every word fell from my lips, every look that accompanied it. I wish not to see it, but am compelled. And those evil words of mine which are now no longer capable of injuring others, wound me, and produce incurable sores.

And not only does every evil deed and every evil word come back to me, aye, but every wicked thought and idea; and they sting my heart, and never let me know a moment's peace.

I have often heard it said in the world, "In Nature nothing is lost!" No, nothing, alas, is lost in the spiritual world; not even the very smallest iota!

But not only the evil I have done, but the good I have left undone, rises up in judgment

before me and condemns me. Innumerable are these accusing enemies. Both what has existed and what has never been assumes a form, and rises up against me. Frightful apparitions are they, sufficient to people a whole world around me, in the midst of which I stand alone, and condemned. The good I have neglected, too! Ah me! it is almost worse than the evil I have committed. For the temptation to evil was often so strong, it would have cost such great exertions, entailed such severe sacrifices, to have withstood it. But to have done that which was good would have cost little or nothing. It is all so clear to me now.

Yes! it is passing strange what a clear view one gets of the world and of human life from Hell!

The man who neglects to do good is inexcusable; for however limited his means and resources may be, opportunities are constantly recurring. It all depends upon his possessing a heart. Therein lies the power—there the blessing. By a wondrous contrivance of Him whose being is love; there is but a trifling difference between poor and rich in this respect, between the powerful and the weak.

Oh, take care, then, my brothers and sisters, you who still see the light of day! take care that you never become the prey of a

bitter remorse ; how bitter I cannot tell you ! Let no opportunity of doing good pass by you. It is so easy, and it costs so little. For the opportunities you allow to pass by unused will some day return to accuse and condemn your soul through all eternity.

I am not addressing myself now to the really hard-hearted ones. God alone can touch them. But there are some soft hearts which only need a sunbeam, or a warm breath of wind to open them. It was by no means my misfortune in the world to possess a hard heart ; on the contrary, under ordinary circumstances I was readily moved to compassion. But either I did not pay any attention to what concerned other people ; or, if I did, it was with a glance so fleeting that it was forgotten again directly. Ah ! if I only knew that my experience would be of benefit to you, how it would sooth my pain. But I do not know it, and however fain I would believe it, I am compelled to entertain serious doubts about it ; for doubt, horrible doubt, is one of the chief components in the pains of Hell.

Again I feel a desire to exemplify what I have said. A living example has such a wondrous power about it. Aye, and a living example it is, though it comes from the realms of Death :

Two doors from my house there dwelt a poor family in a cellar. As I passed by it my eyes used involuntarily to fall upon a window in it. There was a bald-head in constant motion that rivetted my attention, but it was a long time before I could get a view of the face belonging to it. He was a father of a large family, and sat on that bench bent over his work with unflagging diligence from morning till night. Apparently not necessity alone, but interest also made him so eager. He was a wood-carver of some talent, and used to make toys for a large toy warehouse in the town. Strange enough, he excelled especially in making all kinds of wild, savage beasts. I say strange enough, for he looked far from being ferocious himself; to judge by the expression of his face, a meeker, gentler, more pious soul could not have existed. He got over his work very quickly, and the window-ledge above him was filled with lions, wolves, and hyænas marching one after the other. His *forte* lay especially in wolves and innocent lambs. Still he found it hard work to support his family, which was already large, and kept increasing regularly each year. But as far as I could judge, they were a very happy family. The wife took in washing, sold little billets of wood for the stoves, and baked potatoes; in

short, helped in a variety of ways. Thus, either assisted the other, and with care they managed to make both ends meet.

But a time of adversity arrived. The toy-warehouse failed. No longer could I see the shining bald-head in the deep cellar; all was as dark as the grave down there. What had become of it? I asked myself once. And after that I never troubled myself further about the matter.

But one day as I was taking a walk outside the town my memory was refreshed. I not only saw my bald-head again, but his whole person. The poor, infirm old creature, who had hitherto been occupied only in very light work, had been obliged through sheer necessity to work in a brick yard—a labour of the severest nature. His knees literally tottered under him, and the sweat rained down in big drops from his forehead.

I felt sorry for him; it was plain he was working himself to death. His life was in as great danger as if all the tigers, wolves, and hyænas he had ever made were living animals, and were attacking him. And there was yet something more touching still about the case. Once or twice I was witness to a family scene. The wife would bring her husband his dinner, all the children with her, one on her arm,

another in her apron, and the rest following her on foot. I saw how tenderly she wiped the perspiration off her husband's brow; how the children clung around him, and how grateful he seemed for all the attention and care lavished on him, and how strong he made himself appear for their sakes.

I felt much moved at the scene, and on my return home decided that something must be done for the poor family. It would not have been difficult for me. I could easily have got the man a situation as porter, inspector, or some other light employment; for from the position I held I had many such opportunities. But, meanwhile, I had to leave home on business; and on my return I had forgotten all about the matter; when it did recur to my mind, it was too late. The poor things (what else could have been expected?) had perished.

But there is even yet worse to follow. Whether it is only a fantasy belonging to the juggleries of Hell, or whether it is really a kind of clairvoyance peculiar to its denizens, I am often able, as it were, to follow up the evil I have been the cause of on its way through the world, and to mark how it has spread from one to another without bound or limit. It is far from my wish to track its course, but I am compelled to do so from stage to stage,

till it accumulates into one, and I can perceive no more.

Terrible are the effects, fearful the misery which one bad, or even thoughtless act, aye, or one careless word is able to accomplish in the world. Singly and alone they are mischievous enough ; but the mischief would be but proportionately small if they exhausted themselves in one blow, and then perished or became powerless. But such is not always the case. Frequently they possess a diabolical power of spreading, so that it is in their consequences they first become harmful. One misery follows on another indefinitely. It is not the actual evil in and by itself that lays the world waste, but its consequences.

This leads me to think of offences.

Oh, what a terrible instrument are they in the world, more terrible than any one can possibly imagine ! With good reason has woe been cried over those from whom offences come. They are worse than the plague-smitten or the leprous. Offences especially have a devilish power of propagating themselves. There is no limit to their consequences. The evil which bad men commit is in itself nothing when compared with the evil which they cause by a scandalous example. The wicked principle issues forth ; no longer have they any

control over it. It now proceeds by itself, knowing no restraint. Its consequences are felt long after the persons are dead and gone, and the responsibility, therefore, becomes greater. Ah! it is fearful.

It is painful to say it, but I fear it is in this very point the demon within me has gained such strength. Offences have proceeded from me in all directions, and unconsciously I have been the destruction of thousands. It is all clear enough now; one thing comes back to my mind after the other with the most bitter remorse, and makes itself the more felt, because I believe that I am able in the spirit to track the evil which once proceeded from me on its course through the world, with its endless consequences of woe.

Do you understand me? You will do so if I only adduce one or two instances.

One evening I chanced to meet a number of jovial young fellows at a large banquet. I had been especially invited to honour the entertainment with my company. The distinguished part I was asked in all sincerity to take pleased me not a little, so I went. Under the circumstances, of course I felt it my duty to take on myself to amuse the company. That evening I found it no difficult work; I was witty and humorous, and my humour

waxed stronger and stronger with excitement. A great number of speeches were made and toasts proposed. At last I rose to propose a toast and make a speech. I knew I was looked up to as an authority by the young fellows, so that I could make them believe and do anything I pleased. I therefore stood up as one from whose mouth streams of rich experience flowed.

“Only venture” was the subject of my speech.

I alluded to what I had attained in the world, how rich my life had been in enjoyments, nearly all of them the fruits of “only venturing.” In that little word a treasure of knowledge was contained, greater than all the treasures of Solomon. What better advice, therefore, could I give my young friends before whom the world had just unfolded itself, than “Venture, only venture, venture to be happy!”

My speech was received with clamorous applause. The wine was strong, but my speech was stronger; they were intoxicated with my words. Some, indeed, soon shook it off, but with three or four at least the baneful advice struck root, and they issued forth into the world to put into practice a maxim three-fourths of which was false. It could not be otherwise than destructive to them, and

through them to numberless others. For the false principle which appeared so grand and brilliant, extended further from soul to soul. Alas ! it is spreading still, and I see no end to it.

Yet another incident, and one of the most burning.

I had been on a visit to a friend of mine in the country, and was just on the point of leaving. The carriage was at the door, and I was actually stepping into it, when I recollected that I had left something in my room ; so I hurried back to fetch it. There was a maid-servant there, busy tidying up ; she was young and uncommonly pretty, scarcely eighteen years old. All at once the whim seized me, and I threw my arms around her, and gave her a kiss. With a feeling of injured modesty she disengaged herself from my embrace, and blushing deeply stammered forth :

“ Sir, I am a poor, but a virtuous girl ! ”

“ Poor, my child ! what ? you poor ! ” I answered. “ With a beauty like yours, you are immensely rich ; you could buy the heart of a millionaire ! ”

Thus I spoke in the thoughtlessness of the moment ; for I did not attach any meaning to my words ; it was only one of those silly ways of expressing myself peculiar to me at that time of my life.

The poor girl stood blushing before me, while I continued in the same tone and spirit :

“ And now, my beauty, to thank me for the golden lesson I have given you, you shall bestow a kiss on me of your own free will ; perhaps we shall never meet again.”

She resisted ; but I was young, and good-looking, too, and I knew how to wheedle the fair sex. In short, the result was, she let me embrace her, and gave me a hearty kiss. The girl was completely in my power ; I felt it in a moment. But the moment was not mine ; the postillion was blowing his horn impatiently, and I was obliged to tear myself away. But as if to prove to her that her good looks were a productive capital, I pressed a piece of gold into her hand.

Now, I did not see much harm in all this ; and perhaps the greater part of the world would be of the same opinion. But in reality I had saddled the world with a tremendous evil. Not only had I instilled poison into the young girl's veins, but into her very heart. Her innocence was gone, and ruin had already struck its roots deeply. I can track it all now, and can see in the spirit what were the results.

She was engaged to a respectable mechanic. But her capital, she considered, would never

gain the coveted interest from him, and she discarded him, to his great and unconquerable sorrow.

So she went out alone into the world, to make her capital of beauty remunerative. She spread her snares far and wide ; but, however prudently she intended to work, it ended in her being caught herself. She became the victim of a wily seducer. Yet this did not check the principle on which she had been working ; on the contrary, it now began to flourish and to bring in interest.

As a courtesan she continued her course, and soon became one of the most accomplished and artful of her race, and thus proved the ruin of one fool after another, and her capital brought her in large returns. For a time she almost wallowed in gold. Such were the fruits of my first ducat ! But she never became rich ; all her wealth disappeared as it came, in senseless waste. Before she was aware of it, her capital was spent. For a time she struggled on under the lowest depths of degradation to keep herself up. But her doom was sealed, and her end was most miserable. But this was not all. The poison which had tainted her blood transfused itself into the veins of others with whom she came in contact. And even the evil principle which

she owed to me she diligently transferred into other women's hearts, and so from heart to heart it spread and grew—Oh, woe! oh, woe! —to infinity! Beauty is capital; make it pay, make it pay!

Such was the fate of one with whom I had so little to do, that I did not even know her name. How must it have fared with many others? How with Anna, against whom my sin was a hundred times greater? Strange, the spirit will not assist me in tracking her destiny! Or is it true that I dare not track it? Most probably it is between the two. If she were once to appear before me, and drag me after her. Oh, how terrible it would be!

There is a fearful power in offences! Those, therefore, who live among young people, and who are looked up to as an authority by them, have a tremendous responsibility resting on them. Consequently, bad educators of children, parents, masters, guardians, are here in numbers. They come to Hell first; it cannot be otherwise; then follow the poor children they have ruined, and their children's children, and so on; generation after generation, they meet here with bitter, terrible reproaches. I myself am among the number of these wretched people, so that I have good grounds for speaking as I do. I know what I have to

look forward to. It is, namely, to see Martin. Poor boy! He was brought up, as it were, by offences. I can truly say, but, alas! with no good meaning, that he became what I made him. He was me all the world over. But he is still alive; he may improve. But what is he likely to be, and his children after him, after the instruction he received from me? In the world I had no family. Alas! here in Hell, I shall chance to have a large one. Still let me say, God watches over all. For Martin, and for his, there is still a Saviour!

How I loved him spite of all his rude behaviour! Perhaps it was sheer selfishness on my part; or perhaps I loved him because I found the reflection of myself in him. But it was a strange affection. At last it was mingled with envious feelings. I could not but feel jealous of him, when I saw how each day he grew handsomer, more lovable, more captivating, than myself; how gradually he became my successful rival in everything. But these feelings of jealousy so far from diminishing the love I felt towards him, on the contrary increased it. One of these impressions is especially lively in my remembrance.

As he grew up I paid great attention to his physical development. His mental education I left for others to see to, and I did

not ask many questions; but I took upon myself to instruct him in all kinds of gymnastic and manly accomplishments. An accomplished hand myself, I taught him fencing, shooting, riding, boxing, and wrestling. He was unusually strongly built, and was perfectly and symmetrically made. Even before his twentieth year the athlete was so far developed in him that he would have excited admiration in Greece or in Rome. We used to wrestle nearly every day, and each day I noticed that he became stronger. A time soon arrived when I perceived that it was all I could do to keep my own against him. And even that soon passed. One day—the thought of it even now excites me—he lifted me off my feet three times, hugged me in his arms, and threw me with violence to the ground. Henceforth he was my master. I might have foreseen that it would be so soon. For not only did my powers decrease with increasing years, but his grew stronger. Still it vexed and worried me; and I could not forgive him. But at the same time, strange to say, I was inwardly proud of him, and admired him passionately for it.

The jealousy I entertained towards him, however, became the more confirmed, when at last he superseded me in the affections of

that young person on whom I had cast my eyes. Even the love I bore to him could not stand this.

Will he come? I dare scarcely doubt it. He belongs to me, and I am in Hell. Then I shall get an answer to the burning question that was on my lips as I left the world, and which incessantly makes my heart ache now. But dare I wish for an answer? A terrible suspicion often comes over me that the answer must contain something fearful. But—even if I should have to swallow all the pains of Hell at one gulp—I must and will have that question answered, “What had he to reveal?”

CHAPTER X.

WHAT an oppressive stillness reigns in Hell among its thousands of millions and millions !

I thought at one time I should get used to it, but that will never be. What a transition from the noisy, boisterous world ! But however wild our life, not a sound is heard among us. Yes ! there is certainly a sound connected with the speech of individuals, but it is heard only by the ears for which it is intended. Perhaps this, too, is only imagination ; we catch at the words, and conceive the sound.

Hell is full of noisy people. Can you conceive how it is ? However much they exert themselves they are not able to give utterance to the smallest sound. If ever they longed for a stupor to seize them it is now ; but stupor is nowhere to be found. They become the wretched victims of the confusion they create.

It snowed to-day, for the first time, though there are no signs of winter ; the lowest degree of cold ever prevails here with the greatest

heat. It snowed to-day a perfect storm of privy-counsellors, counsellors of justice, and of state; court-marshals, excellencies, petty knights, commanders, and grand crosses of various orders, &c. &c.

A number of the last “. . . *ske Tidende*,” which came in soon after, explained it all.

In one of the petty states of the world a colossal distribution of titles and orders had taken place on the occasion of a marriage.

Small nations are generally madder than others in this respect. But, at least, they should reflect that a whole nation consisting only of knights and counsellors would present one of the most ridiculous spectacles in the world. But such appears to be their aim. Indeed, many have brought it to such a pitch, that it is not only considered no honour to wear a title or a decoration, but rather a disgrace to be without one. It is all the same to us in Hell. We can very well put up with a little snow. However fast it comes down, the flakes are dissolved just as in a thaw, leaving no traces behind saving a certain unpleasant odour.

Still a word of comfort should be said on behalf of these poor titled folk; that all titles and orders do not come down to Hell. Some of them find their proper place in

the world, though generally it is vanity altogether.

Aprupos of the “... *ske Tidende!*” There was a very remarkable article in it, headed “Freedom on the broadest foundation.” It was really very well written, and its style was so full and overflowing, that it afforded quite a peculiar interest to read between the lines. The author is rather low in the world at present, but would willingly be higher. Therefore, it is that he would like to have all “constraining bands loosened.” If ever he comes into authority he will be one of the worst despots (not to say tyrants) the world has ever known. Another wolf in sheep’s clothing! But it is in vain I cry, “Take heed, take heed!” The world will be imposed on.

As the light waxes stronger, my heart becomes more and more uneasy. I look forward with anxious expectation to the hour when the splendour on yonder side the abyss shall be revealed to my eyes. Paradise seen from torment must indeed be a fearful sight. It will be as if a sword pierced me through and through. But for all that, I can do naught but long, and say, “Strike! here is my poor doomed heart.”

Was there not something once called “Our Father?”

Yes! I cannot doubt it, and it contained a boundless and unlimited blessing. I gasp; I torture myself to repeat it; it seems as if it were on my lips, as if I needed only to say “Our Father,” and the rest would follow. But I say it one time after another, twenty, aye, a hundred times, and can get no farther. Then I try and invert the words, but it is equally useless. I know well enough who this Father is. But he is no longer my Father. He belongs to me no more. No wonder, then, that I cannot get the blessed words forth. Still my soul cannot refrain from incessantly trying, and it wastes itself in its fruitless endeavours.

It is a good thing that we can choose our society here. I do not know how we could endure it, if we were obliged to associate with all the riff-raff, such as thieves, robbers, murderers, traitors, perjurers, and hypocrites, that one meets. Do not be disgusted at my using the word riff-raff. The prejudices of the world, its customs and loose expressions, still cling to us, and we cannot, however much we wish it, get rid of them. True! we are riff-raff altogether, I know that well enough. There is no more perceptible difference between us and the

vulgar herd, than consists in our more developed consciousness, the shadow of the more refined education we received in the world. However, imagination does not do so little after all, and if it was of importance in the world, here it is all in all. Our misdeeds may be fully as bad as those of the multitude, but they are not so gross; indeed, in a great measure, they are quite refined. Therefore, we speak now, as of old, of the rabble, and pick our company as well as we can. The rabble, as I said, consists of thieves, robbers, murderers, and of all kinds of low villains; while amongst us, seducers, gay people, the covetous, the haughty, and all kinds of knaves are to be found, that is to say, quite respectable folk. Like naturally seeks like. Human nature in Hell is principally represented by sympathy. Indeed, this instinctive impulse is even more lively than ever amongst us.

Sensitiveness, as you can readily imagine, is the prevailing ingredient of life in Hell. Alas! so much the worse! Therefore we are very exclusive, and endeavour to keep everything unsuitable out of our social circle; and though it is a difficult matter, yet we are very particular (nice is, perhaps, a better expression) in this respect. Not only do we *chassez* what is mean and vulgar, but even what is

ugly and repulsive, without respect of persons ; so fine, so excruciatingly fine, are our powers of perception.

Some time ago, a pretty young woman came here, a little coarse and unrefined, perhaps, but only the more attractive from her deficiencies. Her history is told in a few words. She had deserted her old blind mother to follow her lover, a harum-scarum circus rider, through the world. She died suddenly in the midst of the intoxication of her passion, consequently she lifted up her eyes in torments. She glows, shakes and trembles with anxiety and nervous fear as we do, and she is a prey to a pining desire. She pines for her mother, whom she will never see again ; and for her lover, whom she is looking for with the most eager expectation. Still she loves him. Dare she then hope that he will come ? She cannot help nourishing the cruel wish. In it consists her sole, aye, her sole hope. And, moreover, come he must, they have sworn to be eternally true to each other. But she may have to wait long.

Meanwhile he, the noble one, is never out of her thoughts ; he is the hero of all her dreams. She sees him naturally, as she saw him the last time, in all the enjoyment of youth, beauty, and strength, in glittering

attire, on the prancing steed, the admiration of the assembled multitude.

At length he comes, but hobbling on crutches, with running eyes, and tottering knees. All passion, all pleasure, has long since died out in him.

What a meeting! What a recognition!

She shudders at the distorted image of her precious, her incomparable one. But still she cannot help lavishing her caresses on him. In vain he pushes her aside; in vain does she strive to fly away: she hangs over him; wherever he goes there she is present. In short, the passion became so repulsive that we could endure it no longer. The young woman had hitherto been one of us, but we were obliged to get rid of her, so it was not long before the pair had moved off.

Not long ago, another woman came here, young no longer, but still attractive; one of those blue-eyed, auburn-haired, languishing beauties which Germany only can produce.

And the reason of her coming to Hell?

Well, there was none other reason but her excessive devotion to her husband. It was touching to hear how she had sacrificed everything for him. And he proved unworthy of her love. Her sin was that she had sacrificed too much for him, yes, far too much; not h

self alone, and all the world besides, but even God. Yes! she had set up her husband in God's place, and he had been her idol. Great though her affection was, it was a false essence; lovely and touching as it appeared, it was at bottom but an intensified, egotistical propensity.

In Hell she is consumed by pining after her husband. In life she knew but one feeling; therefore she knows now but one torment, excepting, of course, inevitable remorse. At length her husband comes, the villain, with a heart occupied by another passion!

Is she not severely punished? Even in Hell she excites commiseration, and her case creates a great impression. But high society in Hell could not exist if it did not pay some regard to decorum. On these matters we are inflexible. Of course it is only the shadow of decorum I am referring to.

Perhaps you will say it must be a great advantage to be able to pick one's company in this way. Yes, it certainly is an advantage; but, alas, my friend, there is nothing in Hell but what results in misery. This power of selection, therefore, is extremely painful; for we feel well enough that at bottom it is vanity—a mere form, into which we endeavour to transfuse reality.

I spoke just now about remorse! They are

numberless; but they compose only one moiety of our torments; the other is made up of lusts more ardent than ever, because, without a body, without a world, they cannot be appeased.

Could you believe it, I still sigh after that wench—she was certainly very pretty—whom I once took off the very doorsteps, and who repaid me so badly by preferring the boy to the man, and in becoming Martin's wife, or, rather, mistress? I am full of a passion, the like of which I have never felt before. And so it is in all respects. I pine after amusement, good living, old habits, empty honour—aye, even sordid meat and drink. I have no longer any stomach, and yet I pine to get it filled.

Everything is pain, continuous pain!

There is only a moment in our existence when all envious longings, all passions, in a word, everything in us, all our thousand pains, rest awhile. (Oh! but do not think we are free from pain!) Our ordinary pains certainly lose power, but an indescribable anguish comes in their stead. Now and then, for instance, a horrible dread runs through Hell, a kind of fearful panic, the like of which the world has never known. Everything is arrested in its course, stiffens, becomes mute, and trembles and quakes. Something awful is occurring. We do not see it, but we feel it, and we all

know what it is. It is Satan reviewing the souls in Hell. As yet he has no power over a single one of us, for judgment has not yet been pronounced. But he can wait. He rejoices at our increasing numbers. He resembles the shepherd who takes delight in looking at his flock, though the time for slaughter is not yet come. He knows that sooner or later a numberless flock will stand on the left of the Almighty's throne, and that this herd is his to all eternity.

We see nothing ; but we feel and shudder. Meanwhile, the flock is aware of the proximity of the wolf. And yet at times one can see, when the horrible dread, for instance, occurs on that night which we call the Night of Death. What is to be seen I know not ; I have never experienced it, and it would be worse than foolish to tempt any one to speak of it.

In my youth I was many a time on the road to become a good, christianlike, pious individual. But each time it dissolved itself into nothing. The recollection of it has something very sad, and yet inexpressibly touching about it. It was Lili who chiefly was the instrument of this mercy of God, which so unhappily, so shamefully came to naught. From the very first time I ever cast my eyes

upon her, she obtained a hidden, inexplicable mastery over me. Do not say directly it was my evil lusts and passion that brought me under its influence. Nay, it was something better; it was a hallowed power. All children, I think, possess it more or less; but Lili possessed it in its fulness.

In winter-time after dinner was over we used to sit round the fire before the lights were brought in. My mother generally took her *siesta*, while Lili and I gave up ourselves to reverie. In what totally different regions our fancies hovered! I could sit for hours watching her as she sat on a low stool in the full glare of the cheerful fire. I was in the dark, and could not be seen, and this made my enjoyment the greater.

Generally, she would sit with her hands clasped round her knee, her favourite posture in her reflective and speculative hours. How lovely she would look by this light! A little pale, perhaps, but all the more beautiful. The glare from the fire flickered on her large dark eyes. They had a wondrous brilliancy; their equals could nowhere have been found. Her delicate features seemed illumined. Now and then a deep-drawn breath or sigh would show how busy she was within. I almost devoured her with my glances. Had there been any

truth in the mystic doctrine of magnetism and sympathy she must have noticed it. Perhaps she did; for at times she would become very uneasy under my gaze, as if under the influence of some hidden but mighty power.

It all stands out so clear to my recollection. At such moments I felt tempted to start up and snatch her to my bosom. But I did not do so; had I frightened her, all my pleasure would have been lost.

But sometimes she would sit by my side, and we would pass the hour in a low, confidential conversation.

“What!” you exclaim; “what conversation of an interesting nature could possibly take place between you and her?”

Yes! you may well ask. But it was she who interested me.

One evening I asked her what she was thinking of, as she sat steadfastly looking into the fire.

“What am I thinking of?” she repeated, in her soft tone. “Yes, of nothing, but that I am thinking. It seems as if I had flown far, far away to a foreign land over the mighty seas—yes, to another world beyond the sky. Sometimes, I even lose myself in my flight. I fly to Louisiana, that lovely land, where everything is so different to this; much richer,

larger, and more beautiful, and where the sad winter is a thing unknown. There stands a house on the banks of a large river, with pilastered hall and verandah beneath the shade of pine trees and planes. I traverse the lofty saloons, but they are empty : my parents are not there. I hurry through the garden, through the grove, across the meadow, but can find no abiding place. No one will recognise me. Dark forms flit across my path, and I pause to ask them questions, but they all shake their heads sorrowfully at me, and hurry by.

“Heart-broken I turn away from the beautiful but desolate spot, and fly back again over the sea. Unwearied I go from land to land, seeing many wondrous things, and exchanging in my flight words with many remarkable and amiable persons. But wherever I am there is something I miss. Then I soar up higher and higher in my impetuous flight above the clouds, aye, above the moon and the stars. All at once I find myself in the most lovely garden. I had thought nothing could surpass Louisiana, the home of my birth ; but this is far, far more beautiful. It is Paradise ; God’s own garden. There at last I find my parents : I knew well enough I should meet them again. There, too, I find peace ; there is nothing more to long after. My father and

mother tell me how happy they are, and how dearly they love me.

"It makes me so vexed when the servant comes in with the candles, for it seems as if I had suddenly fallen down from a great height, and the earth had struck me a violent blow. I feel dazed, and have to bethink myself where I am. I feel so weak and poor, and everything around me appears wearisome. Do you understand me, Otto?"

Yes; I understood her well enough. They were downright foolish dreams. These evening hours did her no good: but of course I did not say so.

Another evening as we were sitting together she suddenly asked me:

"Otto, what is it necessary to have to make one happy?"

The question took me by surprise, but I quickly recovered my composure, and answered in a prosaic manner:

"A pious heart, good health, a good establishment where there is no want; finally, a choice of pleasures, and some nice people to love one."

"I have all this and more; am I happy then?"

"Yes; are you not, dear Lili?" I asked in astonishment.

"I do not know," she answered, thoughtfully. "I want something, if I could only say it out. I am of no use or joy to any one in the whole world."

"How can you talk so? Are you not a joy to mother and to me? And as for the rest, of what use can a little girl like you be in the world? She should be diligent; should grow up and learn to be good and religious, so as to be able to be of use some day, and to fulfil her destination. But, as I said, are you not a great joy to me and my mother?"

"You do not stand in need of me; but there are so many who do stand in need."

"And so do we, Lili; every one stands in need of love."

Lili quietly shook her head.

"What can I be to either of you, Otto? She is your mother, and you her son. But what am I? In truth I belong to nobody. You found me, and took me in, and that is all."

"What are you? First and foremost, you are my dear little friend, whom I would not part with for a kingdom, are you not?"

"Little friend? Yes; what is that?" she added, after a short reverie.

"Shall I tell what a little friend is? She is a dear, tender little being that has given

one, not her heart alone, but her life; who wishes for nothing more than to bear all one's sorrows; who can make one smile in trouble, and at other times can almost make one weep for joy. Yes; a little friend is the greatest treasure to be found on earth."

Lili looked at me in amazement.

"I do not quite understand you," she said.

"Never mind; some time or other you will. But directly I ask you, will you be my sweet little friend?"

She reflected a moment, and then raising her pretty head, looked earnestly into my eye, and said firmly: "Yes; I will be your little friend; I shall be something then!"

"Yes—more than you are aware of, Lili," I answered.

Thenceforth there was a precious little secret between us. Often and often when I passed by her, or when I went out, I would whisper, "My own dear little friend!" and she would smile at me with such an angelic smile, as she whispered back in return,

"And my friend too."

How delightful it was to sit by her side thus in the quiet evening hours, stroking her silky hair, or playing with her luxuriant curls, or holding her little hand in mine. But—shall I own it?—I felt a kind of jealousy when, as

it often happened, she would fall into a reverie, in which probably I played no part.

One evening—it is quite wonderful with what accuracy I can recall everything, every word, aye, every look—one evening I asked her, “Do you really love me, Lili?” The very question which lovers delight in asking each other.

“Do I love you, Otto? What else could I do? I have neither father nor mother; there is none to care for me in the wide world but you and aunt. Should I not, then, love you with all my heart and soul?”

“I know that, Lili; but could you not learn to love me still more than you do now?”

“Perhaps!” she answered, thoughtfully.

She was but eleven or twelve years old then. At that age children give free vent to their thoughts; and so could Lili at times, like a true child that she was; but her conversation was very different from that of other children. Not only was she thoughtful, but I may say profound, in her answers. Her words, therefore, had an extraordinary weight, and there was a sincerity about them that went straight to the heart.

“Perhaps!” she repeated, and fell into a reverie. “What shall I do, then, for you to love me more? You see, Otto, I have no father or mother; but God’s word teaches me that I

have brothers and sisters without number. Yes . . . but I do not know them ; and they do not know me. I am but a child, in whom no one places confidence, and who can do so very little in the world. But you, Otto, you have power and opportunities, and you go far about. Will you, then, make me a promise?—Whenever you find any of my poor brothers and sisters in suffering, take compassion on them, and be kind to them for God's sake and for mine. Or if you will be truly dear, go out of your way to find them ; and when able, take me with you, that we may visit them together, and speak kindly to them, and comfort them as well as we are able. I have thought long about it ; but I did not know till now how to get it out. . . . Will you promise me that? Only promise it, and you shall be my dearest friend on earth !”

The tears had welled up into my eyes. It was my turn to be thoughtful now.

“ If I do what you wish, Lili, will you love me much, much more than you do now ?”

“ Otto ! I cannot tell you how much !”

“ Then I will promise you on my sacred word. But you, my darling little sister, must be happy ; and not think so much about such sorrowful things. Now look at me, and let me see how happy you can look.”

And she looked up at me, and smiled with an expression of such transcendent joy beaming in her face, as if I had given her the whole kingdom of earth, and of heaven too.

Do you not, then, plainly see that I was in a fair way to become a good man—or let me say a man—in my intercourse with this child? And though at first the motive that attached me to her was a vain, yes, an unworthy one; still so great is the power of holiness and of goodness in the world, even in a poor weak child, that I was on the point of yielding to its hallowed influence. I actually did see after Lili's poor brothers and sisters. From that time it was my great object to be able to exercise compassion. There was no need to do violence to my nature; for by nature, I dare venture to say, I was good-hearted and well-disposed. Not only did I do what good I could at Lili's bidding, but actually found a pleasure in doing it.

And so we used to sit together of an evening, chatting confidentially to each other. I would tell her what I had been able to do for this one, or for that; draw a picture of the wants and necessities of the poor creatures, and describe the way in which I had relieved them, and their joy and gratitude. Oh! how her face would brighten up! Sometimes, too,

I would take her with me into the abodes of misery, and find delight in putting myself entirely at her disposal. It was truly wonderful how well she knew how to do the right thing.

But—need I say it?—I did not become a better man for all this. The spirit, indeed, was put in motion, and had taken a little portion of the heart into its service ; but the flesh was too strong. It was but a transient excitement. The world held me too completely in its power. What Lili had educed in me, became merely a little pastime with good intentions, and no more.

When we parted, and I was travelling in foreign countries, I still took upon myself to see after the unhappy for Lili's sake. But it was merely a kind of idolatrous homage to a precious recollection ; a recollection of her, the sweet little creature, who one day would be mine, aye, was mine already. But how ever could I have filled up my letters to her had I not done so ? I knew that nothing would captivate her so much. I deceived her, perhaps deceived myself too ; but God cannot be deceived.

One day I found her in tears. She was sitting with her hands folded across her bosom ; one by one the pearly drops trickled down her cheeks. Her Bible lay open before her.

“Dearest Lili, what is amiss?” I exclaimed.
“Why are you so sad?”

She raised her eyes. They beamed through her tears. Drying them hastily she answered :

“I am not sad, dear Otto!”

“But you are crying?”

“Not from sorrow, but from joy,” she said, pointing with her finger to the open Bible.
“Se ewhat I have found!”

I bent down over the book and read from the Psalms :

“When my father and my mother forsake me : the Lord taketh me up.”

I did not know what to say, but stood regarding her with a variety of thoughts running through my heart. I felt moved ; what else could I be ? But, on the other hand, I liked this Bible reading just as little as if she were constantly pining after her parents, when she had me and my mother. But I did not deem it advisable to allude to these topics.

I therefore let it pass ; merely saying, “Yes, they are beautiful words, and seem as if they were expressly written for you, Lili. But you must not cry ; no, not even from joy. . . Come, be cheerful once more ; I shall be back in a quarter of an hour, and then we will go out together.”

When I returned she was quite cheerful and

happy after her old quiet way ; her heart and spirit beaming forth in turns.

But those words, "The Lord hath taken me up," were engraven in her heart from that day forth ; and she neither would nor could conceal it. 'They even gave me food for reflection ; but it was a mere passing thought, and they quickly vanished.

Moods like these were not good for her, and I took all possible pains to divert her thoughts. But Nature understood best how to help herself. By degrees she grew out of them, and became stouter-hearted and more cheerful. She was simply a thoughtful warm-hearted child, whose feelings and fancies, naturally lively and excitable, had found a rich nourishment from her lonely and desolate condition. And she was a Creole ; not merely an orphan, but without a country ; a flower in a strange soil, where it must grow as best it could.

CHAPTER XI.

AMUSEMENT ! It is one of the standing countersigns of the world. And yet there is nothing intrinsically evil in it. A fool and an idiot he who lets the fountain of pleasure well up in vain. But to think only of amusement in a life that is so serious and has such great claims ; in which there is so much to be done ; which is so full of need and want, is an absolute evil ; and to this the world seems to have come.

“ How shall I amuse myself ? ” is a question that daily goes the round of the world, in hundreds and thousands of rings. The world may forget to pray for its daily bread ; but to pray after a fashion for its amusement, it never forgets that. Amusement before everything is its morning and evening prayer. People will amuse themselves, even though there be not a crust of bread in the cupboard, nor a shirt to the back ;—yes, though father and mother should be lying on their bier. People will

amuse themselves, how ever sad, how ever depressing their circumstances ; aye, even under the greatest calamities,—such as failure of crops, pestilence, bankruptcy, civil oppression, or the destitution and destruction of their fatherland ! Yes, it is a matter of experience, that just in such critical times as any of these, there are more amusements, more dissipations, to be found in large towns than at any other period.

It has not always been so. Even fifty years ago it was very different. At that time work was the main object people lived for. Still, even then they would amuse themselves ; it is a natural consequence, and follows as a matter of course. But they were content with a moderate diversion as the wages of their work. Now, indeed, it has become the one aim and end of life !

Yes, only fifty years ago ! The hankering after amusement has grown with prodigious rapidity and strength. It is a frightful moral epidemic that has visited the world ; a sickness abounding with wild fantasies, bordering on the very threshold of madness. It bodes ill ! When games and theatres became the main, the vital object of Greece and Rome, those nations were near their downfall ; and the same phenomenon will be repeated. What will the end of it be ? What

the end will be in the world, I know not; but there is an end here in Hell, that is certain. Those fickle-minded, vain crowds, who only seek after amusements, have but one thing left when all worldly amusements fail—the torments of Hell!

Yet, let me not mislead you: if anywhere amusement is sought after, it is here, but, of course, in a distorted way. What was a sin in the world, here becomes a torment. How ever extensive the places of amusement in the world, they cannot be compared to what is to be found here.

We have, therefore, our Tivoli: give it any other name if you please, it is all one: for as the place itself comprehends all kinds of senseless amusements, so does it include every foolish name connected with it.

When the newspapers announce, with a loud trumpeting, that Tivoli, or Valhalla, or Alhambra, or Elysium, have been visited by ten, twelve, or fifteen thousand persons; what is that? In our Valhalla they stream in by hundreds of millions daily. Evidently, therefore, all the juggleries of the world, all its follies, its glittering shows, are congregated here; and what is more, all evil vices and passions are let loose, like so many wild beasts within the bars of their dens. Merrily, wildly

it goes on ; desperately merrily ! You cannot tell whether you are on your head or your heels ; whether you are yourself or another person ; whether you are alive or dead : you are torn along, tossed about. Aye, it is terrible merriment, and yet quite, quite noiseless.

On emerging from it you are so bewildered, so spent ; as weak, as if you had been incessantly purged for a fortnight ; so weary, so disgusted with yourself and everything else, so broken down and exhausted in mind, as if you had suffered from all the fatigues of *ennui* for a year and a day. But none the less can you help partaking in it again, whether you will or no, and again straining every nerve, again be bewildered, and confused without a shadow of enjoyment or satisfaction. Our Tivoli, then, is a kind of prison-house, calculated to prosecute amusement, pleasure, frivolity, and wantonness ; and it fully succeeds. How those souls that formerly shunned work now pine for a little employment ! Even the meanest, most ignominious labour,—aye, even slave labour,—they would deem the greatest boon.

But the night has come when no work can be done.

I often ask myself many questions, and this especially among the number,

“ Have you really ever loved ? ” And I have

arrived at the mournful result that I never knew what love was. My childhood cannot be taken into account here; for the feelings of childhood are as undefined as they are sincere. It only refers, therefore, to a riper age. And here, in the first place, a mark must be placed against everything that was merely lust and passion; and next against everything that was only pure selfishness: so that there is but little left. At the very most, there can only be mention made of my love to my mother, to Lili, and to Martin.

My mother! Yes, undoubtedly I loved her. I love her still. I admired her with all my soul. Not without good reason did I look up to her as an exception to the world, as a pattern to her sex, as a model of perfection. She never did what was wrong; no word ever escaped her lips which she had cause to repent. No one could ever accuse her of any dereliction of duty, of any breach of decorum. Religious and good, she ever had the fear of God and of man steadfastly before her eyes.

Yes, I loved her! But to speak honestly there was a coldness in my love, a certain lacking of spirit and of warmth. It cannot be ascribed to selfishness alone, which even in this connection was the fundamental principle of my affection. Doubtless it had its origin in

that authority she held over me from my earliest to my latest days. And this control she swayed perfectly. Duty, right, decorum, to which she could ever refer, were like so many stakes in my flesh, by which she could transfix me to any spot she wished. Certainly, it was but a moral power, and so far a legitimate one; but there was something suffocating, almost killing about it.

Better had she referred everything to love. But her affection to me, great though it was, had, I fear, the same failing as mine; there was a coldness in it, something clammy about it. I cannot express it differently. And after all I dare not scrutinize her motives, as I would aught else. Enough that she was my mother; though there certainly is some doubt whether self-love did not constitute the principal ingredient of her love. I have too good reason to suppose so when I look at myself.

And then, my love to Lili!

Nay, it was not mere passion, nor was it mere selfishness. No, no, I say, far from it. There was really a heart in my affection. I would willingly have gone through fire and water for her. It was not, therefore, sensual love that was the cause of my attachment to her. And, indeed, I gave up a great deal for her sake. Not only did I control myself, but I denied myself

many things on her account. Still it must be allowed I did so with an eye to the reward I hoped to reap. I was like a man whose mouth waters after a fruit, but who lets it remain on the stalk till it is perfectly ripe.

But still I can with perfect truth speak of my love to Lili. It was her spirit that held me fast and controlled me. She could have made me anything she pleased—even a good and religious man. It was not her fault I did not become one. For there was a something essential wanting in my love to her: There was plenty of flame; but light—ah! light was wanting.

And lastly, Martin!

I loved him too. There was at least a fourth part of real good in my affection to him; the other three I allow were made up of self-love. I loved him especially, because I had succeeded in making him the exact counterpart of myself; because he grew up to be me over again. I loved him as my own creation, over which I had absolute control. Therefore I pressed him one moment to my heart, and the next spurned him under foot. But I will not talk any more about it; I am ashamed of it. . . . Ah! if I could only escape by feeling ashamed!

What then did I lack? Why could I not love like other men, with a genuine love?

It is no longer a secret to me!

God's love had not yet dawned upon me : God's love manifested in the fulness of time. Truly, one can only love with the love of God. True love is ever divine. In God it has its source ; in Him its goal. Only in God is love able to deny itself, to suffer, to hope, and to endure until death.

There is a tradition current in the kingdom of Death about God's Son, who once preached in Hell, and released the prisoners, and filled up the abyss between the place of torment and Paradise. Then it was light in Hell ; still the greater number were hardened, and relapsed into darkness.

An ardent longing seized me to speak with some one who had heard God's Son preach. It was foolish, I allow. In torment every impulse, be it good or evil, must end in vanity. We are perfectly aware of it, and yet experience makes us no wiser. We begin over and over again to meditate, to desire, to conceive, and strain every nerve to clothe our thoughts in reality.

I found people, it is true, who had heard that Divine sermon, but naturally only the lost. Lost people are not a people. If they had only retained a single word of the Saviour's discourse they would not now be

in torment. The absurdity is palpable. I got one or two of them to speak, but it was all a medley of nonsense and of blasphemy ; so at last I was obliged to relinquish my desire.

But still I ventured out on a longer excursion through Hell. I say ventured, for it really does require an amount of courage to throw one's self thus among the herd. This serpentine swarm—I do not know that I can use a better expression—is in truth frightful, even for one who has nothing to fear, and nothing to lose.

You must not expect any detailed description of what I saw and experienced ; it would carry me to too great a length. For of what interest would it be to you to be conducted through these swarming motley crowds of thieves, murderers, cheats, and liars, forgers, and of the numbers who have cursed themselves into Hell ; of wicked children and bad parents ; wicked husbands and wives, who cannot get rid of each other ; of sinners against nature of all kinds ; hypocrites, false witnesses, adulterers, traitors, &c. ?

But stop ! It is too ludicrous a spectacle. Who are those queer-looking fellows ? Turkey-cocks under human forms. These are the arrogant, the haughty. They belong to the scum of Hell, and are always to be found in a swarm. Everybody takes delight in kicking them out.

And those wretched women, with those wild, languishing glances, with those deep, longing sighs; what do they remind me of?

Of a hen who has lost her chicks. In vain she clucks and spreads her wings. Lost is lost! These are wicked mothers, doomed to long after their poor, neglected, ill-used children.

But who are those strange persons that seem to be constituted of a melting nature, with soft hearts melting with sympathy? They go about in crowds, offering their help and assistance. With puling manners they rub up against every one, and stick fast where they can.

These are the merciless. Once their hearts were too hard; now they are too soft. One keeps all these adhesive sort of people as far as one can away. There is no one now who wants them.

Sundry forms and scenes shall now, as if spontaneously, spring into existence under my pen. With that you must be content.

I would cross the dark river. But when I came to the ferry I found a lake or rather a morass before me instead of a river. The stream had suddenly overflowed its banks, and had thrown its putrid, slimy mire far and wide. The stench was enough to suffocate one. The

cause of this fearful flood soon became generally known when we got a copy of the well-known "Missionary Intelligencer," in which the startling progress Christianity had made in China, Japan, and India, was blazoned forth to the world. One bouncing falsehood like this is quite enough to make the river rise and overflow its banks. Do not misunderstand me. I have nothing to say against a true missionary spirit, which humble in heart performs its work in quietness. But there is another, a counterfeit one, which the world has taken by the hand. This is it which makes use of trumpets. The world is and remains only a charlatan.

There was a large concourse of people assembled at the ferry. Some evidently, like myself, wished to cross over, but determined to wait till the waters had subsided. But the greater number had come on account of the mud.

You must have heard the street boys in the world calling out, "Look at the mud!" We say the same here. What is interesting before everything? In the world it only needs a gutter to run over to collect a crowd. How then about a river running over, and that the black river? Do not hold your nose. It was just the stench that brought all these people together.

As I would not wait, and as I neither shared in the prevailing taste for the interesting, I

went higher up the stream. It was indifferent to me where I crossed over. Higher up, the river ran in a deep channel, and there were but few traces of the flood visible. Both banks were thickly studded with villas in every conceivable style. In Hell fabulous buildings are everywhere the order of the day. It is so easy to give one's imagination free scope, and here it is the only thing to be done. Let us but imagine a thing, and, how ever bad it be, it immediately exists. Meanwhile it does not take place without entailing suffering; for it is impossible to tell how this straining of the imaginative powers harasses and enervates the soul.

But these country seats and places of amusement on the banks of the black river are the most romantic I have ever seen. I began to think of the —— river. Were these villas on the slimy, stinking banks an imitation of those on the —— river? If they were, then I must say they were a very bad imitation. Buildings, gardens, statues—all can be conjured forth; but the situation by the river does not apparently enhance the beauty of the scene.

I passed through several towns, large and small. Wonderful enough, the black river, like the rivers in the world, exercises a certain attractive power. Its banks are more thickly

populated than any other part of Hell. And yet there are long, waste extents. Perhaps it is only imagination, but the desolateness of the place seemed more fearful than anywhere else. And yet—who can account for a human soul?—I remained here much longer than I needed to have done.

I was sitting musing over my evil plight on a low rocky ledge overhanging the river, whose sluggish putrid waters rolled lazily on under my feet. The old fables about the river Lethe came into my mind. Alas! mere fables! There is no oblivion after death. If there were such a river from whose waters one could quaff a draught of oblivion, there would then be no place of torment in Hell. Consciousness, memory, these are our bitter torments. In the world there used to be a momentary, a partial forgetfulness of self. Nothing like it exists here.

I fancied I heard some one groan. I rose to my feet, and a strange sight met my eye. He was a man of stately form; not so his posture. For he was squatting down by the water washing his hands. They were covered with blood; but the more he washed them, the more bloody did they become, so that when he held them up out of the water, the great drops fell off them. It was horrible!

He knew very well that I was behind him,

for all at once he turned round without further introduction, and asked me the question, "What is truth?" .

I started, and for a moment was unable to utter a word in reply. Strange questions like that cannot, at all events, be answered in an off-hand way. With an impatient expression on his face and in his voice he again asked,

"What is truth?"

I replied, "It is a truth that it is too late to inquire what truth is here!"

But the answer did not seem to satisfy him, for he shook his head and turned away, and again began eagerly to wash his bloody hands.

I tried to get him into conversation, but it was useless. I could not doubt, therefore, but that here was one of those wretched beings before me, who once had stood face to face with the Son of God, had conversed with Him, and had had His life in their hands. I burned with eagerness to get him to speak; but all my pains were thrown away. So at last I left him.

Who could it be? It scarcely needed one look at the long robe with the purple border, and the ring on the finger, to feel certain that it was none other but Pontius Pilate, once the Roman governor of Judea!

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When he has not anything to do in the Jewish capital he is always to be found crouching down by the river side washing his hands. And when any one passes by him, he turns round and asks, "What is truth?" And everybody is obliged to give him an answer to his question. But he ever shakes his head; no one can tell him. For the question does not refer to truth in the concrete, but to abstract, absolute truth. Nobody knows anything about it here.

Do you not see the striking anomaly? Pilate asking about truth, while he is washing his hands in the mire and mud of falsehood.

I crossed over and passed through desert tracts; I mean uninhabited tracts, but not un-betravelled ones. There is not a spot in Hell, how ever wild and desolate it be, that is not well traversed. Some spirits, indeed, seem to seek just these very places.

Here the wild hunter is to be found, not only the hunter of popular tradition, but numberless others. Countless are they who, in different ways, pass their whole lifetime in hunting after a miserable bit of meat, or after a still less worthy object—after a phantom, an idea, or even after nothing at all, but merely for the pleasure of moving quickly. Before they are aware they stumble into their graves, and find themselves in Hell's torments.

Here, too, those who cherish all kinds of sinister, misanthropical notions, or have committed crimes against which all human nature, evil or good, revolts, may be seen stealing along. Loneliness is a necessity to them. Were there a solitary place, no matter how frightful it might be, many would flee thither to shun contact with their fellows.

There is one of these forms which, once seen, is never forgotten. He is of a gigantic and towering stature, half naked, clad only in the skin of some wild beast. A thick, tangled mass of hair covers his head and hangs down over his eyes. There is a wild, glowering, and scowling look about him. On his forehead there is a fearful brand. He carries a huge club in his hand, not, however, for self-defence, for he is continually on the flight, fearful lest any one should kill him. Every one who meets this frightful apparition cannot repress a shudder. Still he flees from the weakest and smallest; always flying, ever alone. It is one of the greatest rarities ever to see him in company with any one. Nowhere and yet everywhere—an exile on earth, an exile in Hell.

It is CAIN!

I hurried away, and as he did the same we were soon out of each other's sight.

Here, then, I had met one who was even

more wretched than myself. A murderer, a fratricide; and I was not an outlaw among the outlawed. But I did not derive any personal consolation from the fact. My funeral sermon, unhappy recollection, was too firmly engraven on my memory for that. There is nothing more calculated to mortify egotistical feelings than a sermon such as mine was. But I have forgotten to tell you about it.

In the very first town I came to by the river, I almost stumbled over my own funeral sermon. I fell into the hands of an old ballad woman, once a Prima Donna and Improvisatrice, who would let me have no peace till I had seen some of her "bran new" songs.

Whether she knew me I cannot say. But amongst her collection I found, and started back just as if some one had given me a violent blow on the head, a song bearing the following title:—

"A BRAN NEW AND MOURNFUL DITTY
ABOUT MR. OTTO N.—*primus inter pares*,
Who had paid for the best Hearse and best Parson
IN ORDER TO GET INTO PARADISE,
BUT WENT TO HELL.

Motto (his Reverence's own words): 'We shall meet again.'"

My funeral sermon, here in Hell; and in verse too!

I ground my teeth and began to read.

First, there was a fulsome laudation over my virtues, especially those which I never possessed, and a corresponding estimate of the loss society had undergone by my death. A feeling of nausea came over me. Thereupon the sermon went on to sketch the blessed state into which I had now entered, as a reward for my labours; dwelling on the joy, the peace, and splendour which henceforth were evermore my lot.

What cutting, cruel irony!

It seemed as if my heart was pierced by a hundred knives. It was more than I could endure. I flung the trashy thing from me, and rushed away gnashing my teeth with anguish. A long time elapsed before I recovered from the effects of this infernal dose. But never shall I be able to obliterate from my mind the recollection of the miserable wretch that his Reverence, Mr. —, held such a brazen-tongued funeral sermon over.

Oh, what a good, pious fool, or else hypocrite, you must be! As if a man needed only to die to become a spirit in Heaven! . . . But yet—I will not repeat the hope and wish to which you gave utterance. You knew not what you were saying,

“We shall meet again!”

CHAPTER XII.

ON this excursion I saw a king for the first time in Hell; a piteous sight! No greater contrast between the past and the present—the then and the thereafter—can be conceived.

Princes, kings, emperors, &c., occupy the most miserable of all positions in Hell!

Civil distinctions reckon as naught here. There is no connecting link between souls, saving the instinctive feeling of sociability, and the customs they have brought down with them from the upper world. Everything is jumbled one among another in endless confusion. No restrictions, no formalities, are recognised; no kingdoms, no constitutions, no ordinances are acknowledged. Hence it may be readily perceived that princes are a superfluity. Certainly their rank authorizes them to occupy a prominent position, at all events, in polite society. For everybody bows to rank here as of old. But they are too cast down, too miserable, to assert their rights; so they timidly keep in the background. They

are like images of saints from which the gilded surface has been worn off, and which have been thrown into the kennel, where darkness and filth reign supreme. Their greatness was merely conventional; in other words, the gilt was not pure gold; and now it is gone, leaving not a trace of majesty or of nobility behind.

Here they have no kingdom to experimentalize on; no people to tyrannize over; no finances to fritter away. They live and breathe merely in the mournful recollection of a power and a magnificence that have vanished. Out of all their numerous and glittering retinue, only one or two cringing courtiers remain, whom deep-rooted habit, not gratitude, binds to their person. I said they were bowed down. Aye, it is quite true; true to the letter. They are well-nigh sinking under the weight of the crown on their heads.

What does such a crown weigh? Answer me first another question—"How great is a monarch's responsibility in the world?"

Heavy are these crowns; hundreds of pounds in weight! Generally these exalted personages get a couple of their yeomen to support them under either arm, and as they thus shuffle piteously along, they present, need I add, a sorry pageant.

But worse still does it fare with those potentates who were styled "The Great" in the world. Ah! how little, how wretchedly little, are they now! In addition to the weight of their crowns, this unhappy surname has superimposed an enormous extra weight, which well-nigh crushes them to the earth. Only with tottering knees, and additional help, are they able to drag themselves along, groaning piteously all the while.

Genuine great princes are naturally not found here. Those others the world surnamed "The Great," either because they were cruel butchers, who had treacherously shed the blood of thousands of their fellow-creatures, and destroyed the happiness of twenty times as many others; or because they had distinguished themselves by a crafty, shameful policy, which broke through all the restraints of morality, and set at naught all humanity. Others were surnamed "The Great" without any assignable reason. Circumstances proved favourable, and they were well served. Poor bunglers themselves, they were in general the maddest of all, and wished to have divine honours shown them. So they, too, had to go to Hell!

Oh! how far better would all these kings have acted, had they striven to earn for themselves the title "Much Beloved," instead of

that other, "The Great!" Love would have cloked over a multitude of their sins. Now their sighs and moans are vain. The utter hopelessness of the place of torment cannot be better expressed than in the following words; "Here love exists no more."

Never have I heard such sighs as those which proceed from these princes, kings, and emperors. It is a rarity to hear them speak; they only sigh. A sigh expresses all they would say. In every sigh one would suppose they must gasp their last.

It is easy to understand, then, that they are not a very presentable sort of people; and that they are shy, and prefer to keep themselves in the background.

One seldom meets any of them on a high-road. They could not get on there. For they are persecuted by all those whose prosperity they have destroyed, just as a hawk is pursued by tribes of small birds. They are exposed to blow after blow, and by flight they cannot save themselves. So they keep mostly to desert places, principally in the neighbourhood of the City of Unrighteousness, where the only prospect of a kingdom or a principality is open to them.

To this same class also belong the pretenders. Anything more starved looking,

more utterly miserable, and, at the same time, more rapacious than these pretenders cannot be imagined. They resemble famishing wolves, which prowl about singly, full of the expectation of finding a rich, fat prey. But fat baits are rare even in the best parts of the world!

Unhappy kings, so miserable in themselves, and so persecuted into the bargain, the nervousness from which they suffer is still almost their worst suffering! Suddenly a terrible shout is heard: "A Pretender, a Pretender!" and the courtiers instinctively crowd around their king and master. A battle ensues, as ridiculous as it is horrible. But understand me, nothing is really laughable in Hell; it is grievous altogether. With savage impotence the pretender dashes through the throng to tear the crown from off the king's head. The wretched man cannot even defend himself; he is too abject, too bowed down. But his guards do not desert him; they fight as if for dear life. Bravely they fence, something like a hare with her fore-paws; and the pretender is hurled back with ignominy, and has to slink off without the crown.

Thus you will see that if there is anything even still more miserable than kings, it is the pretenders.

And how happy many of these wretched beings might have been ! What an enviable life they might have led ! Fortune had blessed them from their birth in preference to millions. They possessed what in common *parlance* is termed wealth ; they had exalted rank, and were amongst the respected and the honoured. But they could not be content with such a distinguished private life. They were seized with the delirium of ambition ; a crown they must obtain. And to obtain it they plunged headlong into a course of life, in which they must needs lose all self-respect, and risk their fortune and their peace into the bargain. They must stoop to the most unworthy machinations, associate on the most intimate terms with the lowest of the low ; and finally have the blood of thousands resting on their heads.

Naturally their so-called “divine right” was ever on their lips ; and thus they strove to make themselves and others believe that it was in the service of righteousness they sacrificed themselves, and everything else besides. But this “divine right” was perhaps but the fabrication of a lying imaginative power, a *rechauffée* of old scandalous falsehoods, with a spice of new ones according to taste. At all events it would have been far better for them had they wrongfully encountered a happy

end, than with right on their side have entered upon the torments of Hell.

I spoke of human butchers! But it is not necessary to be either a king or an emperor to be a human butcher. Some of the greatest butchers the world has ever known have been ministers, governors, generals, &c., &c.

Here in Hell they continue their bloody career. I am thinking especially of the generals now. In the world, battles and slaughter constituted their pastime and their joy. Here the joy of course is gone, but the pastime remains. There is no lack of adherents to these notable leaders. They have a superfluous influx of all those whose pursuits were war and blood-shedding in contradistinction to that peace and love which God has had proclaimed to the world; not to speak of the countless herd that is without a master, and which congregates wherever an individual is seen towering above the mass, or wherever the sound of a trumpet or a drum is heard.

On the wide desert plains the armies set themselves in array, hundreds of thousands against hundreds of thousands. A battle is fought! With banners waving aloft, though with chattering teeth, they advance against each other. Empty game! The cannons belch out their smoke, but no report follows.

The stalwart columns press onwards. One would think a terrible crash must ensue ; but all passes off in perfect silence. For no encounter really takes place. Instead of trampling on his foe, each man runs through him. It is indescribably stupid ! No result, no victory is possible ; nay, it is even an impossibility to gain ever so trifling an advantage. But, still, after the necessary breathing time, the same game commences anew. Vanity of vanities ! It must be consuming work. It is not the heart's blood that flows in these contests, it is the spirit which bleeds itself to death, and yet never dies.

It made me think of the heroes of the Valhalla. But 'twas a foolish thought ; there is no comparison between these and them. The heroes of the Valhalla moved in power and in glory ; it is not only a real, but a perfected life they live, without any regrets. The heroes in Hell, on the contrary, are both laughable, and enough to make one weep ; these heroes, with chattering teeth, their powerless blows, their endless, fruitless labours ! But there is no one who either laughs or weeps at them.

I have just come from one such battle-field. Two renowned generals were opposed to each other, two of the greatest butchers recorded in

history. Though servants of the same kingdom at different times, they are far too powerful for Hell to hold them both at once. Therefore they live in continued enmity, and wage war after war against each other. But the result will ever be as it was just now. The battle was undecided. One of the generals rode by me on his return from the battle, distinguishable by the long plumes in his hat, and by the little grey horse he rode. Coming up to where I was standing he halted, and I heard him mutter between his clenched teeth, "I will burn him, and his whole crew!" I could imagine the other general muttering in his beard, "I'll hang him!"

In these remote wastes—a foolish expression where everything is a waste, but I have tried in vain to find a better one—one frequently stumbles on colonies of a certain mighty nation, which I will not mention expressly by name. I will blame no one. And this people by the side of great defects exhibit many estimable qualities. I never could make this remarkable nation out. The greatest contradictions seemed to be united in their character. By the side of bombast and the quaintest eccentricity they display the greatest solidity of character; with a puling sentimentality,

arrogance, and ostentation, an even, hearty nature ; with falsehood and treachery, an exemplary uprightness and fidelity ; and with a cowardly and oppressive spirit, a valiant and chivalrous disposition. After this definition you cannot fail to recognise it.

But notwithstanding all these opposite qualities, it is quite certain that they have a wonderful gift of making themselves detested wherever they go. Everywhere they will speak in a lofty strain, strike the keynote as it were, and seek to show their authority. They seem firmly to believe that they have been specially selected to civilize all the other nations of the world, to teach them what truth is, and what right is, what education consists in, and what morals are. Here they are just the same as of old. Everywhere they are running foul of some one or other, stirring up strife, and making themselves hated. But patience is not so enduring in Hell as in the world. They are driven, spurned away, and have to fly. From them proceed these numerous colonies ; so insufferable a people is for the most part obliged to live alone. Hence the instinctive desire of emigrating and colonizing.

I think I understand now the meaning of these desert tracts. It is less probable that

the above-named people have chosen these places for building colonies in, than that they are the result of these colonies. The fact is, no one likes to have them for neighbours.

There is one speciality about this nation worthy of notice, namely, the number of literary notabilities it yields to Hell. I always knew that it was a nation of authors, and that there were few among its educated classes who had not attempted some branch or other of literature. But because a man writes, it is not, therefore, necessary that he should write himself into Hell. Still, the phenomenon can be explained !

With a large proportion, authorship is a kind of literary dawdling or toying, under which the recognition of the seriousness of life, little by little, falls to the ground. They live as good-for-nothings, as good-for-nothings they die ; and, therefore, as a matter of course, come to Hell. With another large proportion authorship is a trade that is not only plied in the service of gain, but often of meanness, falsehood, and calumny. Naturally the result is the same.

Amongst these *literati* journalists undoubtedly occupy the foremost rank. True, there is this in common with the newspaper writers of all nations, that they are somewhat lax,

and not very particular about telling a lie now and then. But I fully believe that only in one country in the world is there to be found a press that has exhibited proofs of an organized system of lying. And in its time it has accomplished many great and remarkable things. It has given powerful support to false pretenders, created seditions, and has even paved the way for conquests. Naturally it had to do with the small and the weak; falsehood is ever cowardly. How there can be unity in such pursuits, and among so many, passes my comprehension; and yet, perhaps, it is not so difficult to understand after all. In this country the greater number of the journalists have their price, and are to be bought over either by flattery or by gold. The bribed ones band together, and the rest are gradually dragged along with them; it is so stupid, and withal so dangerous, to stand alone.

And there is another peculiarity about this great nation; now and then it is subject to a regular ecstasy. Now it rants about a popular "unification," though, not only in reality, but in all its ideas, it offers a spectacle of the most piteous disunity; now about liberty, though it slavishly worships and grovels in the dust before everything that is a little exalted; now it longs for a fleet, though it is a continental

nation, and on one side only has a very imperfect access to the sea. Now it will have a war in the Devil's name, and perform some exploit or other that has never been seen before; and, with this object in view, seeks out the weakest among its neighbours, whom it then distinguishes by the title of an "hereditary foe."

In short, when such a rapture comes over the nation, unity follows as a matter of course. All lie with one throat, and pervert everything in the most shameless manner. A thousand pens are set a scribbling along the road of falsehood to promote the magnificent enterprise. Not only is free scope given to the imagination, but, with a cool and clear consciousness, palpable facts are made away with. If, unfortunately, there are none in the way, so much the better, they can be made *ad libitum*; it is easy to invent a few!

The tendency—they call it the idea—is all in all to them, and, without the slightest hesitation, truth and honour are sacrificed to it.

Impudence has been created into a power by these persons. Only tell lie upon lie, and it is sure to answer. Certainly all these lies are not believed at once, but some importance is always attached to them; and, by daily repetition, even the most barefaced falsehoods are gulped down whole by the public. It then

becomes a fact, and serves as a foundation whereon others can be built.

The perseverance these people exhibit in their lying tendencies, is almost incredible. We have instances of their having lied continuously for fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years in succession, in order to carry a project through, which they have seen floating above them in the clouds. And see, the system triumphed!

Not only have they succeeded in carrying their own, but a large portion of mankind along with them. They either carried out, or very nearly carried out, everything they pleased. Over untoward events mortal man, of course, cannot prevail. I am not *au fait* in their method, and, therefore, am unable to say how many times a lie should be repeated to convert it into a fact; but, certain it is, that it eventually does become one after constant repetition.

By this time, therefore, it must be quite clear to you how it is that such an overwhelming number of the literary characters of this nation find their way down here. Some have sauntered along the road of literature, others have lolled into Hell. Amongst these last, the systematic liars are especially distinguishable. The journalists fare the worst

of all, in whom so great and so responsible a trust has been reposed. They became fat on lying in the world, and here they are literally basted in their own grease.

As you are aware, we all suffer from a parching thirst ; we pine for a drop of water. Still it would hardly occur to us to slake our thirst in the slimy putrid waters of the black river. There are some, however, who have secretly tried it. So that in Hell there are people who are habitual tipplers. One often hears a person say to another, " You have been drinking of the river then !" For, in reality they cannot conceal it. The traitorous lying stuff streams out again from all parts of their body ; oozes out from every pore, in order to return to the river. Only the vanishing aliquot portion of the lying liquid, which adheres to the tippler, remains behind to add fuel to another burning thirst. So they slink down once again to the river to quaff off another dose. Thus, in a measure, the whole mass of water in the black river is gradually distilled through them. Eminent mathematicians have calculated that an ordinary drinker, reckoning after the earthly duration of time, would require 7213 years, 93 days, 11 hours and 39 minutes to empty it in. As yet no one has completed this course ! A

more nauseous sight than one of these tippling journalists presents, cannot be conceived. And even this is not the worst; but I will say no more about them. There are things of which one cannot speak.

Of course there are beggars in Hell. But I lately chanced to stumble on some of the most remarkable beggars I ever saw, or rather they stumbled on me, and nearly succeeded in making an end of me. You could not possibly guess what their importunity consisted in—on nothing less than to baptize me. They besought me in the most whining terms to let them baptize me; possibly I might have given way, only that I had no use for that sort of thing. The more angry I grew, the more humble, but the more importunate, did they become. They would not take a refusal. That I ultimately escaped, I can only attribute to the fortunate circumstance that a more promising-looking convert fell in their way.

These beggars, the most miserable I have ever seen (I scarcely expect you to believe me), are missionaries. I do not know whether you have heard of the business-like way in which the holy missionary spirit discharges its office in the world. It is nothing but a chase after heathens; a regular hunt after the

little ones that have short legs, and who cannot defend themselves.

In their eyes learning is a matter of secondary importance ; the road it marks out is too laborious. Baptism is everything ; and the only question is, to find an opportunity of sprinkling water over as many heads as possible. So many heads, so many names are entered in the registers as converts to Christianity ; and their number is then copied into the Missionary Journals, in order to fill the Christian world with amazement and acclamations of joyfulness. Of course it follows, as a matter of course, that the greater proportion of the baptized consists of children, who naturally grow up in masses without retaining the slightest recollection of the Christianity imparted to them.

These missionaries have to wander indefatigably about, beseeching people in the most importunate way to be baptized, begging as if life itself depended on it, in a manner that is quite heart-breaking. In truth, it is a thousand times a greater object with them now to get a baptism scratched out from the register, than ever it was to get one entered. For this purpose their register-books are always at hand ; but it is but little success they meet with. Some are angry and uncivil to them,

believing that they wish to taunt them ; others laugh and make fun of them, as if it were a capital joke ; while others, again, turn their extraordinary religious fervour into ridicule. Enough to say that, however smoothly their work went on in the world, here it is just as great drudgery. They have to retrace their steps along the very same road on which they travelled. But it is a road without an end ! without a goal !

“ Three is a lucky number,” we used to say in the world. But it was often a lie from the hell of hells. No wonder, then, that this triple element often bothers one. Thus I know very well that God is a triune God, but to get three persons united under one head surpasses my powers. Do you understand ? Tri-unity ever, as it were, falls to pieces before me. Further than to two persons I can never advance ; for when I would name the third, alas, he is gone ! In vain I rack my brains, it is as if heart and head would burst. Now it is God the Son ; now, God the Holy Spirit, that is wanting ; and now . . . yes . . . I am very near to it . . . No ! . . . it is useless . . . it is desperate !

There is also another trinity which sorely puzzles me. This, too, falls to pieces before

me, but not always. Faith, hope, and love. Do you see? But what is faith? What is hope? I know neither the one nor the other more. But what love is, I still know to my deep sorrow; and yet, no! I only know what it might have been.

Oh! that you would be warned! you who still walk in the light and in hope. Love is not a sport, an idle joke; it is life's most earnest reality. If I had ever rightly understood what love was, then faith and hope would never have failed me.

Oh! be warned!

My heart burns for you, mostly, it is true, from anguish, but still from love. For you, my silent friend, who have not answered with a single word to all my letters. For you, my mother, though my deepest sighs ever escaped your ear. For you, Martin, though you are the cause of my unceasing torment. What do you want with me? What have you to tell me? For all of you, all! Even from Hell I call you my brothers and sisters!

CHAPTER XIII.

I do not recollect whether I told you that it is really a matter of perfect indifference what language we speak here. All languages are understood equally well among us. But the real state of the case is, there is no language, consequently no speech. The articulations we think we give utterance to are probably but imaginary on our parts, as everything else is; and we catch one another's meaning after a strange fashion, without any intermediate agency, which it is impossible for me to explain. Only one thing I know, that this method is so certain that we never—as was often the case in the world—misunderstand each other's meaning.

Human nature is pretty much the same everywhere. In Hell, therefore, a soul may also stand in need of solitude. It is often quite refreshing to me to get out of the throng, and to hie away to the desert tracts in this fright-

ful land ; and when I get quite by myself it seems to me as if I could breathe more freely. I stop still, or else sink down, to give free admission to thoughts which come streaming in, or else occupy myself in fruitless endeavours to come to an understanding with myself. Need I add that this pleasure is not unaccompanied by pain ; for the more conscious the spirit becomes the greater the pain that follows.

But it is a rare thing to find perfect solitude, even in these desert places. Some one or other is sure to intrude upon one, and then I am obliged to divert my thoughts. This compulsory companionship, however sore a trial it be to the patience, is frequently not unattended with interest, in so far, of course, as interest can exist here.

Thus, a little while ago I was bothered with a German Professor of History. But in order not to be too personal, allow me to state, *en passant*, that German professors may be most estimable persons, very learned, and, withal, kindly and amiable. Of course, there are exceptions.

My Professor was one of those who could deduce everything possible out of history, that either his own inclinations, or those of the people, or the pleasure or whim of a highly esteemed prince, might deem desirable.

Thus, if a small portion of a state conceive the idea of separating, and of forming an independent body by itself, they are able in the twinkling of an eye to discover some constitutional precedent out of the musty and mouldy archives to authorize rebellion. Or if an entire, or a half, or only a duodecimo prince, conceive a *penchant* for a particular parcel of territory, it is but a little matter to prove His Royal Highness's hereditary right and title to it. Nothing is impossible to their profound learning, when the fancy takes them, or gold allures them. They can change black into white in a twinkling, or white into black, and into white again, if necessary. In this last manipulation, indeed, their highest art consists. And, if the result which their profound investigations have discovered, and pronounced to be the absolute, unalterable truth, by some trick of fortune does not quite answer the expectations formed of it, without feeling the slightest discomposure they undo what they have done, and arrive at another result directly opposite to the former one, and pronounce it in turn to be every whit as absolute and unalterable a truth as the other was. It would be a sure sign of moral depravity to entertain the slightest doubt about it.

It is such people as these that have given

rise to that remarkable proverb, "There is a science in lying, as the Devil said when he was studying at the University of Kiel!"

Well, we sat and conversed together in this lonely place. Naturally I was the one to receive instruction, and I gave myself up with apparent credulity to be crammed full of all kinds of lies, the like of which never were heard on earth.

Presently, my attention was arrested by the appearance of two gigantic forms that emerged from out of the misty darkness, and approached us, with slow and measured steps, as if they would pass close by where we were sitting. They were walking arm in arm in brotherly confidence. But they presented a very incongruous pair. The form on the right I recognised instantly, even at a distance, though I had seen him but once before. It was Cain! The other, however, though of powerful build, seemed quite small by the side of Cain. I did not know him. He was dressed in the costly style of the middle ages, and in comparison with Cain's semi-nude condition, seemed to be smothered in clothes. He wore an ermine cape over his knightly habiliments. A massive gold chain, with a medallion attached, hung round his neck, and reached far down on his breast. Golden spurs glittered on his

boots, the tops of which hung loosely down. On his casque was a ring of gold, with pointed branches resembling a crown, and an enormous sword was girded round his loins. But though of commanding stature, and handsomely attired, there was a lack of nobility about him. He seemed to have a difficulty in walking, while Cain's uneven and irregular gait made it still more difficult for him to keep pace with his companion. In truth, a more dissimilar pair could not well be conceived. And yet there were many remarkable points of resemblance between them. Both had the same nervous, scowling look. Both had their brand mark; for as they passed us, I could see when Cain's companion raised his casque that the ring had left a bloody, glowing mark across the brow.

I could not repress a shudder; but after they had passed us some little distance the Professor whispered to me,

"Did you see that sharp-pointed stake which he had through him?"

I had not observed it.

"But there is one," continued the Professor, "though he takes all possible pains to hide it with a fold of his cloak. That is why he walks so lame."

"Who was it?" I inquired.

“It was Cain and Abel.”

This answer puzzled me sorely. I got quite confused, and for a little while was quite unable to collect my thoughts. Surely Abel was Cain's innocent, murdered brother. Abel could not possibly be in the torments of Hell! And still less could Cain and Abel form a pair in Hell!

At last I got my thoughts so far in order that I was able to ask, “What Abel?”

“Abel, King of Denmark,” was the reply: “died June 29, 1252.”

Now it was all clear!

Still I knew but little about this Abel. But the German Professor knew all about it, and did not keep his knowledge to himself. He told me that “Abel had been one of Denmark's mightiest kings, one of those great geniuses which appear centuries before their time, and who are, therefore, misunderstood and wrongly judged. So was Abel by the stupid Danes. He was the first monarch on whose mind it had dawned that only by German civilization and favour, by a political and moral dependence on the great and powerful Germany, could there be any future for Denmark. But the stupid Danes either could not or would not see it. They hated them to the death; there was no accusation too base but they charged them

with it. So at last he was forced to yield, and he fell as one of the first and chiefest of martyrs to a holy cause,—Germany's world-wide vocation to civilize and to ennoble all the nations of the world."

"A martyr! . . . and now in Hell? . . . and Cain's companion?" I ventured to insinuate.

But the Professor made me no answer, for a third person had meanwhile come up, and, without any ceremony, at once usurped the conversation.

He was a strange-looking individual, apparently composed of two heterogeneous pieces. Like the mermaid in fable, he was beautiful to look at above, but hideous below. Looking at the upper part of his person he seemed clad as a knight partly accoutred, for he wore a coat of mail of the finest texture over a richly embroidered buff jacket, and a helmet with a golden ornament resembling a crown. His nether habiliments were, however, in little keeping, for they consisted merely of a pair of boots, of the very coarsest and most common description; just like those, in fact, fishermen wear, with soft well-greased tops that can be drawn quite up over the legs.

But without feeling at all discomposed at being criticised, he sat there as a man thoroughly in command of his position, resting

his hands and his chin on the hilt of his ponderous sword. From underneath his bushy eyebrows flashed a glance which it was difficult to endure; and when he began to speak he spoke as one who could brook no contradiction.

A repulsive, malicious smile played round the corners of his bearded mouth. It made me feel quite uncomfortable.

"It is all a downright lie from first to last!" he broke out, in a harsh, cutting voice.

"What! . . . lies! . . . what very rude behaviour!" stammered out the Professor, in a great state of confusion. . . . "And who may you be, if I may venture to ask?"

"I am King Abel!" answered the stranger. "Is there anything more you would like to know?"

"No, there was not!"

The Professor was evidently nonplussed, and speedily took his departure, slinking quietly and slowly off.

"That is the only way to treat these fellows!" exclaimed the knight, bursting out into a hoarse laugh. "One can only beat them with their own weapons. Lie for lie, and boundless impudence, is the only way to make them feel."

"You are not King Abel, then?" I asked.

"No more than you are! What I am is

neither here nor there. Enough, that I am one of Cain's companions ; an outlaw, as it says in the song—

“ ‘ And shall I out of my country fly,
And lie on the water cold ? ’ ” *

Here the stranger suddenly broke off, and passed his hand over his forehead, as if to drive away some evil thought, and then continued :

“ But if you would like to hear King Abel's true history, I can tell it you, though I am not very fond of raking old histories up.”

Here he again broke off, and turning to some one who seemed to stand behind me, called out :

“ Look at me, grinner ! He seems to know all about it. . . . Ahoy ! who are you ? ”

I looked round. Several persons had now come up, among whom was a thick-set young man, with an open, intelligent, rather challenging, countenance, clad in an old surcoat, one sleeve of which dangled down, and with the Danish cockade in his cap. He it was whom the knight had addressed as “ grinner.”

“ Herr Sea-count, or Sea-king, or whatever

* From this it appears probable that the knight was one of those notorious freebooters who, after the murder of King Erik Glipping, committed such depredations on the Danish coasts by their piratical incursions during the whole of Erik Menved's reign.

you are, for no king goes about with boots like yours on dry land," answered the young man, with a grin; "I am but an unfortunate volunteer of the so-called Rye's brigade, a native of Schleswig, and, therefore, but too well versed in King Abel's history. I come direct from the Slie and Danewerk."

"Direct from the Slie and Danewerk, eh?" resumed the knight. "Then you must know all about it. So tell away. But mind, fellow, none of your Schleswig-Holstein lies here!"

"Once on a time," began the soldier, "there was a king named Valdemar. Under him Denmark reached the highest pinnacle of her prosperity; and from his time, though many a false gleam of power and splendour has shot up, the time-honoured kingdom has waned. Valdemar was the last mighty and prosperous monarch Denmark possessed."

"Fellow! that is saying much," growled the knight.

"From time immemorial Germany had been Denmark's bitterest enemy," continued the soldier, not noticing the interruption. "It was a very one-sided affair; but up to that time the Danes had maintained their old boundary in the south, and were destined to maintain it a long while still. Under King Valdemar, the Danes gained the ascendancy, and vic-

toriously carried their ravages far across the frontier. But as the Germans, spite of all confederations, were totally unable to stand against the victors, they had recourse to cunning and treachery. And now fortune favoured them. At the battle of Bornhöved, King Valdemar's power was broken for ever, a battle that forms the unlucky turning-point in Denmark's history. Downwards, ever downwards, till the present time.

"And yet King Valdemar was no less mighty in peace than in war. Formerly he had been surnamed 'The Conqueror,' now he was entitled 'The Law-giver.' Denmark still passed through happy days under his rule.

"Before his death he divided the succession between his sons."

"His sons!" interrupted the knight in an excited voice. "Yes! that was Denmark's misfortune. The son of the good and amiable Queen Dagmar, another Valdemar, died. His posterity would have brought blessings to Denmark; but the wicked and detested Berengaria's sons all lived. They, and their race, have been Denmark's bane!"

"What you say is perfectly true, noble sir," remarked the soldier as he continued his narrative.

"Of these sons Valdemar caused allegiance

to be sworn to Erik as king. The two others got large feoffs under the crown. Abel, the second son, got South Jutland. And then the old king passed to his fathers, convinced that he had secured the prosperity of Denmark in the surest way.

“ But it was but a poor prosperity. Soon there arose strife between the brothers. Abel would not hold his duchy as a feoff of King Erik, but sought, by the aid of a German alliance, to obtain uncontrolled possession of it. The first of his feudal duties was to guard the boundary against the attacks of the arrogant and powerful Germans ; but, instead of doing so, he brought them in across the borders, and thus laid the foundation of the ‘Germanization’ of South Jutland. And, what was still worse, he gave free admission to a German spirit, German morals, and mode of thinking, not only in South Jutland, but, when he ultimately came to the throne, over the whole kingdom of Denmark. At a later period this was destined to turn the scales. A German element in the country, though with empty hands, was to prove a far more dangerous enemy than Germans outside with needle guns and rifled cannon. Who has not heard of the fantastical state Schleswig-Holstein ? Duke Abel laid the sure, though in-

visible, foundation of it. Of one heart with the Holsteiners, the Schleswig duke saw in the king of Denmark only his born foe.

“It happened one fine summer in August that Abel invited his brother Erik to the town of Schleswig. Unsuspecting, and with true brotherly love, the good Erik accepted the invitation, spite of having been warned in a vision not to do so. Abel’s heart was full of venomous poison, and, before long, it showed itself, for he placed his guest, his brother and his king, in chains, and gave him over into the hands of the executioner. Yes, of the executioner!

“What more need I say? The good King Erik was shamefully murdered, butchered like a lamb, and his body thrown into the river Slie.

“Denmark’s throne now became vacant, and after Duke Abel, with four-and-twenty of his knights, had taken an oath that he was innocent of his brother’s death, the stupid Danes chose him to be their king.

“But King Erik had said with his dying breath, ‘If Abel does not repent, he will die a more shameful death than mine!’

“And so it came to pass.

“Two years later, the powerful king of Denmark was forced ignominiously to flee before the brave peasantry of Friesland, and died by a

doughty blow from a Frieslander's axe. His corpse lay long uninterred, and his carrion became a prey to the wild beasts and birds. At last he was buried in Schleswig cathedral. But King Erik's wicked brother had no peace in his grave, his spirit left it, and became the terror of the whole town. Then the monks had his corpse disinterred, and carried outside the town. In the middle of a thick forest they dug a deep hole, and, casting it in, drove a sharp stake through it to keep it fast down in the lower world, where ——"

Here the speaker suddenly stopped. On looking up, I again saw Cain and his companion.

All eyes were fastened on the wretched pair. Without moving, and in breathless silence, we let them pass by. It seemed as if they were terrified. For Cain, ever and anon, kept wildly looking behind him, while Abel walked with his drawn sword in his hand. Just as they passed us, he suddenly halted, and turned his terrified face directly towards us.

"Cain and Abel!" I stammered forth involuntarily.

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, starting up, and the hero stood trembling in every limb. "But it is like . . . yes . . . is it not Erik?"

"What do you think, noble sirs?" asked

the soldier, in amazement, "as you know, it was Erik who was murdered, and ——"

"Yes, yes; Erik—Erik Glipping!" muttered the knight, and again forced himself to silence. "It was—it was only a foolish fancy!"

"Truly, only a fancy," interposed a heavy-looking person by way of confirmation, who was apparently a German lancer. "It is neither Erik nor Abel. On my honour, it is none other than John of Swabia!"

"Cain's companion, of whom we were speaking, has never styled himself by the one name or the other," remarked an old man with an air of great importance. "It is notorious."

"Then are there anonymous personages in Hell?" I inquired.

"Why not?" was the answer. "Anonymity is a sacred thing, and must be respected here as well as in the world."

"Enough, enough," interposed the knight, with an impatient sneer, as he left off biting the button of his sword belt; "let us hear the end of Abel's history before our company gets too mixed."

Thereupon the soldier continued :—

"Though buried with a stout oaken pole through his body, and with powerful incantations, King Abel found no rest in his grave. He was forced to walk. From century to

century down to our day, ghosts have been on the increase, becoming more wicked and more terrible than ever had been known.

“There are few people between the Slie and the Eider but have a story to tell about it. If they have not experienced aught themselves, their fathers before them have. It is especially on the banks of the Slie, out on the wild heath, and on the old frontier fortress of Danewerk, that the spectre may be seen. But it haunts inhabited places too, and even villages and hamlets. What the wild hunt is in Germany, just so is King Abel’s wild course in South Jutland.”

“Quite right!” remarked a sinister-looking monk, who appeared like a run-away galley-slave. “At certain periods he returns to the earth in the service of the Evil One. But he cannot do so as long as the stake is in his body; so he looks about him to try and wheedle some one to draw it out for him. But he who does so receives but a poor reward for his service.—*Retro, appage, Satanas!*—Some time ago he got hold of me, but I took good care not to do his behest on such terms. Yet from what I heard he managed to get out after all. Who the ass was this time I do not know.”

“Not long since,” continued the soldier, “I

was standing by the Danewerk, with my country's old foes before me. It was the last time there was to be a struggle for the time-honoured boundary of the land, or rather at last it was to be given up without striking a blow. It was a fearful time. Not King Abel alone, but all the spirits of evil, seemed to be let loose. Indeed, by far the greater proportion of all the political misfortunes that have overtaken Denmark since King Abel's time have proceeded from the Germanized portion of Southern Jutland.

“Fratricide seems to have left a lasting curse. Abel's spirit haunts the population with the boldest machinations falsehood and treachery can devise with a fratricidal spirit. Recently Abel seems to have triumphed again by the power of Germanization and devilry. Denmark lies low, as once did the pious King Erik, who, bleeding, dying, raised his hand aloft, as if taking Heaven to witness. But the end is not yet! King Abel, remember the wheelwright's axe!

“How King Abel infests the southern portion of South Jutland for shorter or longer periods, the simple folk have many a story to tell. Fishermen who ply their business on the Slie are often terrified at hearing strange sounds proceeding from the shore. It is

as if some unearthly, supernatural being secretly followed the boats along the banks. A howl, or a rattling sound, and all kinds of fearful cries and wailings, mark its course. Sometimes the spectre shows itself, generally in the form of a dark shadow of monstrous shape and length, rising up from above the water, in pursuit of a clear blue light that glides gently along over the rippling surface, without ever being able to grasp it. Of course the fishermen never follow this light, and take care not to come within the dark shadow.

“At Mysunde, the narrowest part of the river, a huge stone lies out in the water, the top of which protrudes above the surface. It is the place where King Erik’s corpse was flung into the stream. Often and often people have seen a dark shapeless form sitting on this stone, crouched up in a heap, and noiselessly stirring the water with a pointed stake. No one has ever ventured to disturb that silent fisherman !

“Sometimes, too, the traveller who is crossing the heath at night time witnesses no less strange sights. As he is wending his way beneath one of those lofty barrows, those memorials of olden time which are especially peculiar to the heaths of South Jutland, a

stone rolls down and makes him start back. He looks up, and sees on the height above a dark form seated there, with its hand under its chin. So dark is it that it would be invisible were it not that it stands out in prominent relief against the clear sky. No movement betrays it to be a living being, but it has a pair of eyes that glow like burning coals. Woe to the luckless traveller if he stays on his course, or if terror makes him pause for a single moment! Never again will he cross the heath. But King Abel remains seated on the mound till cock-crow, devising evil and venomous schemes, which, though he himself be dead, yet by the aid of the Evil One, he knows how to quicken into life and to diffuse into the hearts of the thousands who are slumbering around him.

“But Abel is an uneasy spirit. Still oftener may he be seen galloping across the heath on a snorting steed; he himself in black, the horse a shining white one, and a couple of black hounds following him. White coloured flames seem to stream from his horse’s nostrils, and to flash up from under its hoofs. It is said that the spectre’s track across the heath can be plainly seen long after he has gone. Each place where his horse has placed its foot, the heather is parched and scorched up. And

when on his road he comes to a lonely house, he frequently stops, not to give his steed breathing time, but to breathe out the overflowing wickedness of his evil heart. If he find ever so small a crevice in its walls, it is enough. He breathes through it with a force that makes windows and doors start open. Next morning everything is as usual. But the house is no longer the same. King Abel's thoughts have stayed behind in it. Even people of pure Danish blood and speaking the Danish tongue, by virtue of Abel's spirit feel with a German heart, and forget father, mother, tradition, fatherland, and honour—all that is wont to be so dear to man's heart.

“Forward, forward! over stock and stone on fresh errands. In one night he may visit a hundred places. In different tracts he has certain paths; and there is more than one house to be found where its inmates never dare close a door, for the spectre must have unimpeded course through. If by chance they should be closed, they are violently burst open; and glad enough are the inmates if no other disaster come.

“It is not, however, only over the waste and lonely places that King Abel travels at night time. There is scarce a town which he has not passed through on his wild course.

“When he approaches all the dogs begin to howl in dismal, ominous tones; the cattle bellow and break loose in the stalls. Then the farmer knows what is astir, crosses himself from under his counterpane, and nestles further down into the bed. Next morning some calamity is sure to have happened.”

The speaker ceased; and for a few moments we observed a deep silence, not arising, however, from any uncomfortable feeling similar to that you may have experienced after having listened to a ghost-story in the twilight hours. We know nothing of such feelings here. It is readily explained, for we are all of us ghosts. At all events, the torments of Hell in which we are, is ten thousand times worse than all the ghosts in the universe.

No! that which made us silent, and which made so deep an impression, was the recollection, the lively recollection, of the world, of life.

It was the soldier who again broke the silence.

“A miserable end befel the three sons of the great King Valdemar. Erik was shamefully murdered, according to the unanimous testimony of history and of tradition, by his brother’s orders. Abel met a disgraceful and miserable death under a peasant’s avenging

axe. Christopher, according to the story, was poisoned in an inn. And all this in the course of nine years."

"Why do you not include Christopher's son and successor?" said a new voice; "was not Erik Glipping, too, barbarously murdered?"

I looked up; I did not know the stranger: but on looking after the knight, he had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

WOULD you believe it? However deeply engrossed I was on my excursion with what I saw and experienced, I was far more engrossed with myself. Naturally enough! There can be no talk of real diversion in Hell; even in the wildest hubbub the soul can never succeed in losing itself. And, would you think it? Not only do my evil deeds recur to my thoughts to torture and to harass me, but my good deeds also. I repeat, it is but natural. For our best deeds even are not free from blemish. There is a sharp hook to them all, and it is with this that they recur to the memory here in Hell. It is like a talon thrust into the heart.

Listen to me, while for a little while I am constrained to speak of myself again.

There was a young man in my office I was very fond of. Among other business matters, he was entrusted with several small sums of money. Presently I began to smell a rat;

and several little but corroborative circumstances seemed only to confirm my reasons for suspecting him. I watched him narrowly, and before long discovered that he had taken to gambling. By a strange coincidence an opportunity presented itself of catching him in the very act, and I determined to avail myself of it.

The gaming-house was situate in a lonely part of the suburbs ; and though the adventure was not unattended with danger, I thought little of it. Certainly among my many failings I did not lack courage.

It was one snowy, wretched, wintry night, towards midnight, that I stood outside a dilapidated, apparently uninhabited house, wrapped up in a large, coarse overcoat. I gave a certain signal, and the door was immediately opened. At the end of a dark passage, along which I had to grope my way, was another door ; it was locked, but some one presently opened it, and I entered the hell. Here I found a numerous company of a low, varied kind, who seemed quite at home in an atmosphere oppressive from heat, and redolent with the fumes of tobacco. They were playing different games. At one of the tables my clerk presided ; he was keeping the bank. At that instant an idea flashed across me. It was

hazardous, but I felt sure it would succeed ; so I approached the table, and deposited my stakes.

His eye fell on mine directly ; and the effect my apparition had on him was terrible. He turned deadly pale, tottered to a chair, and let the cards fall out of his hands. When he had somewhat recovered himself, he rose up and seemed hesitating whether he should fly or strike me to the ground. But a stern look and a sign on my part were enough to restrain him. One of the bystanders noticing his indisposition offered him a brimming goblet of wine, which he clutched eagerly and drained to the very dregs ; and now he became as crimson as he had been pale before. Once more he ventured to raise his eyes to mine, but a cold, icy glance made him speedily drop them. I stood to all appearances before him as a perfect stranger, simply demanding that the game should proceed. The others desired the same. No one, of course, had the slightest suspicion of the real state of the case.

There was, then, no mercy for the sinner ; he had to endure it a while longer yet. With trembling hands he dealt out the cards, received and paid the stakes. The game went merrily on, and odd enough the *banquier*

seemed now to have all the luck. But I waited ; I did not doubt but that a turn would come soon. At first I had only been one of many players ; now I was almost the only one. At the proper time I began to force my game. Never had such sums of money been staked there before ; therefore the excitement was enormous. But the *banquier* was the most excited of all, he seemed as if he were on the rack. An end, however, must come ! One turn more, and the bank was broken !

Thereupon the wretched man sprang up, as if beside himself, and endeavoured to rush past me, crying out, " All is lost ; all is lost ! "

But I seized him by the arm. " Not all," I said, in a low tone ; " there is more to be lost yet ! . . . Stay ! We will go together ! "

And I made him take his coat, hat and stick, and leave the company with me in quite a decorous manner. Of course a great excitement prevailed ; but it was managed so quickly and adroitly, that no one thought of interposing.

So I took him with me. With tottering knees he crawled along by my side, while a strict silence was observed by both of us.

But as soon as I had got him into my room, I opened upon him. " I had had such a high opinion of him, he had been so trusted, and

had deceived me so shamefully. . . . He must smart for it !”

He appeared very contrite, humbled, in fact, crushed to the earth. Never had I seen a more miserable-looking object. At length he left off begging for mercy for himself; but besought me in the most piteous terms for his poor mother. He was her only support, and the sole joy that she had left in the world.

I let him beg and pray a long while. I had fully made up my mind that he should not escape too cheaply. He should not forget this night as long as he lived.

At length I began to relent.

“I would give him a chance of showing me that he was really sorry, and of becoming a new and better man.”

So everything was satisfactorily arranged. No! not quite satisfactorily either. For as he was leaving, I noticed that he staggered, as if he had been intoxicated, and could scarcely keep on his feet. I could not let him go home in this plight, for his mother would have at once suspected something. I rang for the servant, and had a bed made up for the poor fellow in my house.

Next morning he was in a raging fever, and became delirious. The thought of his mother now flashed across my mind; he had

been thinking much more of her than of himself. Of course it was out of the question to think of removing him. So I hastily made up my mind. Ringing for my old, confidential servant, I gave him strict orders to make the young man's stay in my house a profound secret, and then wrote to his mother to tell her that "I had been obliged to send him off suddenly on some important business that admitted of no delay. He would probably be absent," I said, "for some weeks, and I would take an early opportunity of calling upon her."

Thus, under the Almighty, his fate rested in my hands. For weeks he lay in a violent fever. Nearly all my time was divided between him and his mother. In reality I was all that a brother could be to the one, and a son to the other. And when at last the sick man began to be convalescent, I nursed him with the tenderest care; while at the same time it was no little tax on my powers of invention to tranquillize his mother.

At last he recovered his health. And then it was given out that he had just returned from his journey, and had been taken ill on the road.

Yes, indeed he had been on a journey to the kingdom of death, and it was from this journey he had returned. But the secret was

well kept, and never came to his mother's ears. I put him into another post in the office, and never had occasion to find any fault with him again.

But now to the main point!

Possibly you may say that I had every reason to be satisfied with myself. I also thought so once. But here . . . here the scales have fallen off from before my eyes; everything is exposed to me in all its nakedness and clearness.

In itself it was no bad idea thus to seize the bird by the wing, and to keep it a prisoner till it was completely tamed. But I am bound to confess that the spirit that prompted me was a presumptuous conceit. My self-complacency did not feel appeased by the moral power I held over the delinquent. With one look I had compelled him to take up his cards and resume the game; and then I had given him a lesson which was a safe guarantee that he would never take a card in his hands again.

And then as to my kindness towards him, after I had once admitted him to mercy. Surely it was a praiseworthy deed!

But if I must speak the truth, it had its principal source in the feeling that I had been too severe with him, and harder than was necessary. I had found a kind of cruel pleasure in seeing him writhe under the lash of my in-

dignation. And thus, my friend, what becomes of the good action? It is its deficiencies only that now goes to my heart and tortures me.

Now it is I that writhe under the thought of what his sufferings must have been. Contradictory as it may appear, it is still true. I suffer from the tortures of a sincere compassionateness.

All his life through he bore traces of my excessive severity towards him. All the buoyancy and high spirits of youth had vanished all at once, and he never became the man his youth gave promise he would be. It seemed as if something were rent asunder within him. A shy, nervous look, ever retrospective, bore ample testimony to the secret history of his life.

Oh! these good deeds, how many have they brought into misery? For, rest assured, if most of the good actions done were to be submitted to a scrutinizing investigation they would yield a pitiful result. Not that I mean to assert that there are no such things as good actions. But when everything is taken into consideration what are the best of them but simple duty?

However one may twist and turn them, no balance will ever be got out of them through all eternity.

Do you know what self-torture is? Doubt-

less! Else your experience of the world has not been great. You know then that there is no greater torture than self-torture. But only first in Hell does it become quite clear. It constitutes the very essence of the torture of Hell, that we ourselves are the instruments of our own torture.

One of the mildest forms of this self-torture is musing; and yet how wearing it is! Yes, wearing is the proper expression for it. We wear ourselves so utterly away that there does not remain a healthy thought behind. Then, naturally, we are obliged to pause. We stand on the threshold of insanity, but over it we cannot step. How the brain swims! How the heart burns! We are just in that state in which people in the world commit suicide. But in Hell we can never carry it further than to wear ourselves away.

Was there not once something called "The Three Articles of Faith?" I have a strangely misty and yet firm idea about it. Had it not something to do with the Trinity? And was it not one of the most precious gifts bestowed on mortal man?

I have mused over it till I have well-nigh lost my senses. But now I have grown a little wiser. Of what benefit had it been to me had I been able to recall them? To the

faith, to which their name and substance are due, I should never have attained. Faith would ever have remained to me but an empty idea. Yes, I have the idea ; but how hollow, how terribly hollow ! There is a bottomless, yawning abyss in it.

What is to believe ? God's Son is the object of faith. I know it, and the devils know it. He is the Saviour ! But how He has become a Saviour, or how a soul has any part or share in Him, alas ! alas ! I have no conception.

And it is just the same with repentance. If I could only feel a moment's real repentance, that same moment I should be saved. But, and it is a natural consequence, I torture myself in vain.

Ah ! I can . . . and yet I cannot. Sometimes I seem so near it, my tears seem on the point of bursting out. But it is all an imposition ; it is in vain.

"Only one single tear," I sigh, in insufferable agony. Oh, eternal mercy ! Ah ! what use to invoke without faith ? . . . Only a single tear !

Time runs on. Nonsense, of course, for there is no time here ! However, there must be something that runs on ; the ever-waxing light shows it. The important, the terribly brilliant moment is approaching when Para-

dise shall swallow up the darkness of Hell in its splendour. Yet, you must not attach any weight to what I am saying. I am talking of what I am quite ignorant. Perhaps this moment may be terrible without being magnificent; perhaps it may still be far off.

Time, however, runs its course in the world; we perceive that plainly. Recently a pompous announcement of a *Te Deum* having been held in one of the world's capitals reached us. It must have sounded through the lowest corner of Hell—the Devil's corner. It must have been a gala day for the damned.

The cause of this *Te Deum* was the prosperous result of a war which a powerful state had been waging against one of its smaller and weaker neighbours. A regular predatory incursion; but it was successful.

The world offered its congratulations; but this was not enough for the conqueror. He must solemnly congratulate himself, and chant a *Te Deum*!

These *Te Deum* festivals are the most scandalous things in the world. It is more than hypocrisy, it is boundless impudence. In order to appear respectable in the eyes of the world, a nation does not hesitate to employ an official blasphemy whereby it may gild over its baseness. So far do people go in their

shameful endeavours to convert dirt into gold, that God even must be dragged down from Heaven into the mire. One day they will bitterly repent it!

One of the illusions wherein the world so readily rocks itself to slumber, and about which there is so much loose talk, is the high degree of moral dignity it conceives it has attained. It is the most wretched, most ridiculous self-conceit. The world is just as evil in disposition, just as brutal and as cowardly as ever; only a little more polished perhaps. In the great world there is just as little of anything that is absolutely valid, or of a fixed nature, as of old. Honour, morality, truthfulness, righteousness, compassionateness, all is mere outside show, directly any higher aim, that is to say, when interest, makes its demand.

The right of the strong has a wide extent still!

Small states, such as Holland, Belgium, Denmark, &c., are a prey to the first great power that only has the audacity to make the venture. Yes, to make the venture; everything depends on that. And if the enterprise succeed, the deed of violence is at once justified.

Such in fact is the real state of the world, of the so-called public morality. If in civil

and in social life men observed the same rule with each other as obtains between states, the world would be one vast robber's den, unfit for any human being to live in.

Yes, truly, one must allow that broad is the road that leads to destruction. But it is from Hell that one first gets to learn its breadth.

Some dance, as it were, along this road. But it takes up some little time, for they have to run into so many inns, taverns, and casinos on the road. The whole of their life is a pastime, a sport, a feast; and they do not inquire whether it is God or the Devil that gives the feast. They employ all their senses, and if occasion offers procure themselves one or two extra senses. It is against nature, it is true; but what of that? The enjoyment is all the greater. They drag as many things as possible with them into the whirl wherein they revolve; whether genuine or spurious is a matter of supreme indifference. They breathe only in the present moment; their future is the next ball, rout, or banquet, the last piece at the theatre, or the latest fashion; their eternity, the wearisome hour of expectation. They say to themselves, "We live, we live." But death holds them in his grasp. Holbein's well-known Dance of Death in the old town of

Basle is more than a fable. They dance, saunter, prate, sleep, and eat themselves through the world. Suddenly a little wretch, and . . . they are in Hell!

And many others creep as it were along the broad road. One would think it was troublesome work, but it is not. The mole in the earth does not find it more troublesome than the bird in the air. And they are a kind of mole.

"We look to what is solid," say they; and then they burrow down into the earth.

"We see," say they, and they are right.

It is a mere fable that moles are blind from their birth. On the contrary they have the keenest eyesight; even for every little morsel they meet with on the road. They are not, indeed, searching for morsels; on the contrary, they are looking out for whole pieces. But nothing is beneath their notice, so they put up with the morsels of the earth's treasures; for they know none other. Ever looking downwards, only that which is found in the soil is of value to them. Of what is above they are ignorant, neither do they trouble themselves to know. It has never excited their attention that there is a Heaven, and that it is full of stars. Their life is one endless burrowing; nay, not endless! For when they have thus burrowed through greater or smaller portions of the

world, all at once they come upon a hole quite unawares. This hole is death. Down they plump into it, and when they awaken to consciousness they find themselves in Hell.

Amongst the many wonderful things in the world, this is doubtless one of the most wonderful, that although all men know that they must die—nothing more certain than that—yet there are so few who think of death, and fewer still who make any preparations for it.

Most persons die, as it were, quite unawares. So most of them awaken in Hell! How can it be otherwise?

Yes, most of them! But even here there is a wonderful circumstance connected with it. In Hell one meets all kinds of persons one had never expected to meet. Respected, honoured, and, what is more, lamented, they passed out of the world; the tearful eyes of those they left behind were upraised to Heaven. But the dear departed ones were not there; they were in Hell! It can readily be explained. God judges differently to men. However good and excellent these persons may have been, they lacked the most needful thing of all; that on which everything else depends—a believing heart, filled with God.

Perhaps these persons may have gained the whole world, but they have lost their own souls.

And now for the other side !

It is often the case that persons never come here, though they may have been long expected. Their deeds, their fame, has gone before them; has long since, as it were, announced their arrival. We expect them, but in vain; they do not come. Only one explanation is possible. Great sinners as they may have been, miserable evil-doers of a deep dye, still they may have found mercy before God in a fruitful repentance. Perhaps at the last moment the Saviour interposed between them and Hell, where they were so surely expected, and where their place was as good as already allotted.

Oh! you who have loved, who bitterly mourn over your departed ones, you will naturally ask with throbbing heart and streaming eyes,

“Ah! cannot then our earnest prayers be of any profit to you?”

I do not know. But pray for us; pray still for us with all your heart, and without ceasing. This I know; true love can never be lost, can never be without fruit.

For God's being is Love, and His Son is the fulness of love towards men. Maybe, maybe

your prayers will even yet benefit us ; not now only, but through all eternity.

Whether I look forward or backward my suffering is equally great, though different in nature. If I look forward, all my suffering concentrates in one terrible thought—an endless, hopeless existence. If I look back, in the ever smarting remorse of an ill-spent life.

Yes, from this place is it only first evident what fruits, what blessed fruits one's earthly life could have borne. Oh ! how happy are you who still live, and who still have the power of choosing your fate.

“ As long as there is life there is hope ! ”

Truer words were never spoken. Oh ! then, never give way to that false, that destroying idea, that it is too late. This lie alone has destroyed more souls than all the vices of the world together. It is not too late ! Even if death awaited you on the morrow it is not too late. Your earthly life, however exhausted it may be, can still bear fruit in peace, in joy ; and the glory of life eternal can still dawn upon you.

Change then your hearts ; turn, and seek peace where only it may be found.

Oh ! if you only had a clear apprehension of the reality as it is, you would never despair. However oppressed, miserable, or doomed, you

may feel yourself to be, you have no reason to despair. It is not on your side that despair finds a home; ah, no! it is here! Here it really is too late!

If you only had a clear apprehension of the very small proportion your earthly life bears to the sum total of your existence, and how very little of that is yet lost, even though all your worldly expectations may have been shipwrecked. All do I say? But no mortal has ever come so far as that. However void the world may appear to him, there is still many a green spot to be found in it; a man's happiness can take root on more than one place in the world, if only hope does not fail.

And the world is not all; it is but a small portion of your allotted existence. Look up to the stars in the sky. There are more than you can number. And if the world really were lost to you, what of that? It is but one star fallen from your Heaven. You have still all the others left. Therefore do not despair. It is a lie from Hell, if any one tells you it is too late. You can still find happiness as surely as there is a God. Only return and seek Him, who can save, and who can preserve you. It is still vouchsafed you, late though it may be, to begin a new life. But delay not to enter upon that blessed road

which leads from star to star into the kingdom of glory. Oh, only do not delay!

For at the same moment death overtakes you on the old path, Heaven with all its stars will collapse, and you will find yourself in eternal darkness.

It is not too late. For however much be lost, the most important thing of all to be saved is still left; even life itself, your immortal soul, your peace, your bliss.

Have you lost your mammon? Your soul is of ten thousand times greater value.

Are you without a future? Behold eternity lies before you.

Has your love been betrayed? Love still will save you.

Are you living a life of abasement? There is an eternal, a perfect reparation.

Has the world abandoned you? Heaven is still left to you.

Can you no longer see any joy before you? Still you may come to be an inheritor of everlasting salvation.

Do you now understand how very little is really yet lost—lost perhaps in itself—but yet so little compared with what is still to be won or lost? Then take courage. It is certainly true; however far you may have gone it is not yet too late! It is not yet too late to

begin a new, a holy, a blessed and a happy life.

I have seen her. It was as if death shuddered through me again. Shaken to the core of my heart, I rushed away from the sight, and fainted under a load of overwhelming accusation. Yes it was her! her, against whom my sin is so great, that I have never once sought to vindicate myself. Do you feel how much this implies?

Oh! my friend! I have never spoken of it, but long have secretly dreaded lest Anna, whose life I so thoughtlessly, so wantonly destroyed, should meet me in Hell.

She is here! I have seen her!

I was walking with one of my acquaintances.

"Do you know Undine?" he asked.

On my replying in the negative, he continued,

"There you may see her."

I followed the direction in which he pointed, and saw a divine, comely female form, very lightly clad, and with dishevelled hair. Her dress seemed to cling to her limbs; she seemed dripping wet. She was quietly occupied in wringing out her saturated dress and her heavy hair. At that moment she raised

her eyes ; a terrible shudder ran through me. It was Anna !

Yes, it was her ! The same regular, lovely features ; the same graceful figure ; and yet, though easy to recognise, still so changed. Ah, how changed ! Truly the same features, but how disfigured, how sadly depraved ! Passion, lust, despair, had each in turn left their marks on her earthly career. She seemed to be many years older ; and perhaps but few years had elapsed between her fall and her death. And her death—I could not doubt it—had been the death of despair beneath the waters.

I shuddered and quivered as a criminal does when he suddenly beholds the scaffold. It was my work—this degraded, abandoned, but so fair, so beauteous a form ! I was crushed. I lay as it were upon the rack beneath this overwhelming load of responsibility.

There she sat wringing out her clothes and her hair by turns, and ever and anon clasping her hands in despair. And I writhed too, under the bitter gnawing of my conscience.

Thus she sat a while, while sigh after sigh convulsed her bosom. Oh, those sighs ! Her full bosom heaved and sank, as if it would burst. At first I thought to flee ; a word from her mouth I felt would slay me. But I

know not what rapture seized me, for all at once I started forward as if to meet her.

Then first did she become aware of my presence. She sprang up, and regarding me with a look full of dismay and loathing fled away.

It was impossible to overtake her. By the power of her will alone she was able to keep ever at the same distance from me. At last she disappeared among a crowd of new comers, who were just making their sorrowful entrance into Hell.

Then I turned back, as if I were being lashed by the Furies!

CHAPTER XV.

I AM just come from the post office! I had only just discovered that there was a post office in Hell. No, there is nothing wanting here, save everything that a being needs to live and to hope for.

I went, then, to the post office to see if there were any letters for me. I felt impelled to go.

There is something very peculiar about this post office. Who has not heard speak of the Uriah and Judas' letters? Some maintain that their discovery arose in the east with king David, in the west with king Fenge. But it is of much older date; for doubtless it dates back to the Devil himself. Nowadays, the art is widely extended over the whole world; yes, many practise it in accordance with a purely natural impulse without ever having heard speak of it.

Well then, all these Uriah and Judas' letters go straight to Hell, and the parties concerned pay the postage at the cost of their salvation.

They are left lying in the *poste restante*, until the party comes, not the one to whom they are addressed, but the one who has written them. It is hard to have to take these letters; they literally burn one's fingers. But that is nothing compared to how they burn the heart. For the letters will be digested; the miserable writers are compelled to eat their own poisonous dirt.

But there were no letters for me; so I have not been a Judas. For the moment I really felt quite light-hearted. But naturally this was a mere illusion.

Those Judas' letters lead me to another consideration connected with them.

There is not a more serious thing in the world than to subscribe one's name, and yet there are few things which the children of the world do more thoughtlessly than this. But woe to these thoughtless ones! Every false subscription, every name which the writer repudiates, goes straight to Hell, and pulls with irresistible power—yes, irresistible; for God alone can break asunder the connection—till the writer follows after it, and finds himself in the torments of Hell.

I have seen a king sitting with a document before him; he has sat thus for centuries. To

this document he had once, in an unhappy moment, subscribed his name; what name he does not now know, for he remembers it no longer; it is quite illegible on the parchment. A blood spot has blotted it out. He ponders and ponders in the anguish and pain of his heart; the death-sweat stands out on his forehead: but the name is and remains wanting; it is not visible. It is his incessant torment in Hell! Oh! if he had only not put his name to that parchment!

I have seen—but it would take me too great a length if I were to speak of all I have seen of this nature. It is especially the so-called high politics that fills Hell with so many false names, and miserable objects connected therewith. It bears the epithet high, because it is ever the world's custom to attach high-sounding titles to the most despicable things. It is styled an exalted policy just because it is something of the most contemptible that is to be found in the world.

The other day one of these treaties arrived here. There was a great blotch in it. Of course we knew what it meant. The state of the case stood as follows:

There was a little state, so little that it could only exist on the most gracious sufferance, that is to say, it occupied a vacant space among

other states. They had been so benevolent as to say that it was necessary to the balance of Europe; in other words, that each of its powerful neighbours had a great wish for it; but as the one could not envy the other its possession, it remained undisturbed. It was a kind of European taboo. In order to make it known to all the world, and to place it once for all on a firm basis, six of the neighbouring great powers drew up a treaty between them in the name of the Holy Trinity, and affixed their names to it, whereby the existence of this little state was assured, of course, to the end of time.

Twelve years passed away, when a totally unexpected and excellent opportunity presented itself to two of its powerful neighbours to mix themselves up in the concerns of this little country, and to feather their nests cheaply. Of course, the treaty was rather awkwardly in the way; but by an arbitrary pretext it was nullified. They simply disowned it. It may have appeared to be a hazardous thing to do, but in reality it was not so: brute force is always sure to overawe, especially when it conducts itself with unbounded impudence, and tramples all respect under foot.

The other great powers growled a little it is true, and thought it was very shameful

behaviour ; indeed, one of them went so far as to give vent to big words. But there it ended. One after the other gave it to be understood that it did not feel itself bound to insist on the observance of the treaty any more than the others, and thus gradually they quietly slunk away ; and when it came to the point, they all in a mass drew in their horns, and let the treaty go to the winds.

Thus, then, was the little state handed over to the tender mercies of the stronger. The world cried "Ah !" over the disgraceful conduct ; but no one moved so much as a little finger in the cause of righteousness and of compassion ; not even a word was spoken ! An earnest word, spoken at the proper time, would have been sufficient to avert the wrong. But Europe, under the circumstances, knew no better policy than to remain silent, and perfectly passive. So the strong fell upon the little one ; three against one ; sounded its ass's trumpet over its easily won victories, and knew not on which leg to stand, so elated were they with the pride of conquest. And then, when they had the little one between their knees, they slaughtered it at their leisure ; laying the fattest and best pieces on one side, in order to agree about the distribution afterwards, as best they might.

This is an instance of an exalted policy, and of the state of public morality in the Nineteenth Century! But the tale is not finished yet.

Torn asunder and bleeding, too little and too weak hereafter to subsist alone, the unhappy victim looked around for a refuge, for a place of resort. Towards the north there dwelt kindred peoples. Naturally its first thoughts were directed to them. But thereon, one of the other powers, that had been a party to the treaty, thundered out,

“You must not venture on such a step; we will not allow it!”

In its despair, it next turned to the south. Betrayed and deserted by all who had called themselves its friends—mark well, that it was in its despair—it asked itself the question, whether it were not better to give itself up entirely into the enemy’s hands, than to allow itself to be dismembered. One knows at least what an enemy is. But before the thought could well be realized, a voice just as mighty as the former, thundered from another side,

“You must not venture upon it; we will not permit it.”

Truly, it was a hard case! Abandoned by its friends, crushed and torn asunder by its enemies, it dared not with its bleeding residue seek for refuge where best it might. It seemed

just as if it might not exist, neither one way nor the other. It was like cutting off a man's arms and legs, and then forbidding him to seek the doctor with the bleeding stumps, or to look about him for a corner where to lie down and die.

This is one example out of many of an exalted policy! But there is more still.

The treaty, of course, went direct to Hell, with all its subscriptions, not in the name of the triune God, but of the Devil. And as Abel's blood cried aloud from earth to Heaven, so do these subscriptions cry aloud from Hell to earth. Each name will claim its own. And these subscriptions pull with a secret, but powerful, aye, an irresistible force. They are like a waterspout at sea; they will be satiated. You, then, who have placed your names in pawn in Hell, tremble for yourselves! Come to your senses! It is but a short road between earth and Hell. Unless you meet the merciful God upon it you will surely come here.

There have only been two persons in the world who were able to teach me patience; my mother and Lili. But Lili's power over me, though her nature was so retiring and gentle, was, beyond compare, the stronger of the two. On my mother's side it was a cold

sense of duty that influenced me ; but on Lili's it was an indescribable heart-warming goodness and tenderness. Conscious of my great physical strength I was passionate and imperious. I had a decided inclination to break through all opposition, and to overcome all impediments. Even at what was literally impossible I chafed and involuntarily clenched my hand. During our journey abroad this unruly temper made itself apparent ; but it was, moreover, on this very journey that Lili gradually gained such complete control over me. I went to school with her without knowing it ; strange enough, I must add, she knew it just as little herself—and among the good, precious things I learnt, or began to learn, was patience.

How vividly it all appears before me !

We had come to Lucerne, and were to cross into Italy over St. Gothard. I had determined that Lili should thoroughly enjoy this passage across the Alps. In my opinion there is nothing more lovely in the world than this sudden transition from the severe north to the mild Hesperian south. By crossing the St. Gothard, Splügen, or Simplon, the fulness of Italy's loveliness is gathered into one journey from morning till night.

A foolish reminiscence ! Why can I not help renewing it with the aid of all my senses ?

The greater the enjoyment then, the greater the torment now.

We were, then, in Lucerne! The weather was as unfavourable as it could be, and we had to linger there a whole week. It was a severe trial to me. Every morning Lili and I used to go out on the long bridge, called the Hofbrücke, over the river Reuss, to look at the state of the weather. We could scarcely see fifty paces before us across the lake. Everything was enveloped in mist and fog; not a single mountain top peeped out, except for an instant, and then vanished. There seemed no signs of any improvement in the weather.

Never shall I forget those morning walks, so vexing, and yet so pleasant. We used to walk and linger there for the chance of its clearing up. Lili would lead me up and down the fourteen hundred feet long bridge like a wild animal in chains. In her presence I did not like to break out. But I could not help biting my lips, and now and then stamping my feet on the wooden planks of the bridge. I used to do it involuntarily. Yet this girl of sixteen coerced the wild nature within me so easily. But one gentle pressure of her soft arm, and I curbed every expression of impatience. The fact was I could have

thrown myself down on the wet, dirty planks and worshipped her.

How inventive, how full of spirit she was in diverting and amusing me, while we paced backwards and forwards on that strange old bridge. It was roofed over, and between the rafters was a long row of quaint old paintings of the most genial composition and execution. She would stop before one, now before another, and by her conversation would put such animation into the pictures, that I could not help being engrossed and even smiling. Often, indeed, I was obliged to burst out into a loud laugh.

When we had thus waited, and waited in vain, and she had succeeded in putting me in a good humour again, we would return to the hotel, where my mother was waiting breakfast for us.

At last early one morning it did clear up. It was a regular holiday. We had come out earlier than usual, and were standing on the bridge, when the curtain of clouds began to lift. The lake gradually unfolded itself to our view, and its lovely shores became quickly visible. Presently a mountain peak peeped out. We could not tear ourselves away from it; we stood as if we had been enchanted to the spot, until the whole transformation had taken place.

At length the brilliant panorama revealed itself in all its magnificence. The shores of the lake lay in one extended bow before us ; while above, mountain upon mountain reared its head aloft, and in the background, and highest of all, the Central Alps with their eternal snow, arranged like a frame formed of the Righi, Pilate, Dödi, Uri-Rothstock, &c., &c. ; but who can remember all their names ? One mountain after the other emerged into view in the dazzling brightness of its majesty.

I nearly embraced Lili in my ecstasy, but lost nothing by not doing so. For she was as much overwhelmed as I was. Involuntarily she laid her arm on my shoulder. I thought I could hear her heart beating, but perhaps it was my own.

So the next day we were early astir, and after crossing the lake made the ascent of St. Gothard with joyous hearts. The sailors were of opinion that the weather was not to be relied on ; but we trusted to our usual good luck, and gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of the day. We walked and drove by turns. Lili could not rest ; no sooner had she taken a little repose than she was again in motion. The mountain nature continued to develop itself more majestically. The first alpine rose had well nigh cost me my life. It was for

Lili, of course. What a day! A day like that is a whole existence.

As the sun set we passed through the wild dark valley of Urserndal, and put up for the night in the little village of Andermatt.

But the next day, what a sorrowful change! A change of weather had taken place during the night; snow had fallen on the mountain tops, and a storm was still raging.

Great was my impatience at this new stoppage. The day passed, and the next, but no alteration in the weather. I made little excursions on all sides, which were not devoid of danger. But it worried Lili, and she begged me to remain at home. Of course I obeyed, and my reward was great. What no other person in the world could have done, she succeeded in doing. She made the time pass pleasantly away, and what is more, gave me, unknown to myself, a further and more complete lesson in patience. I could with reason say I became as patient as a lamb, but that I dislike the comparison.

She took me with her from one house to the other in the little village. She entered them all, as if she had known the inmates long, and the good folks, indeed, received her as an old acquaintance. Those quaint mountaineers so thoroughly appreciated her unre-

served, confiding manner. Everywhere they opened their doors to her, and told her all about their domestic affairs and mode of life. The simple economy of these mountaineers—so different to anything we had seen before—was undoubtedly very attractive; but to speak the truth, I saw little else besides Lili. And who could have turned their eyes away from her? She was like a sunbeam in those dark huts, so ineffably graceful, and yet, in a far higher degree, so benevolent. It was quite plain to me, and I am convinced that the people entertained the same opinion, that she hallowed everything she came in contact with. Oh, Lili! I see you before me. A purer, more fragrant being could not have been found in the world.

But I am wandering!

She took me with her to the small workshops and bazaars, where we found all manner of pretty things carved in wood, botanical and mineralogical collections. Boldly she knocked at every door, and everywhere she appeared welcome. It was like enchantment. A common observer might have said, "Yes, youth and beauty possess such a power!" But in reality far higher means were at Lili's disposal in this enchantment. God alone knew them fully.

Our stay turned out to be far more profitable than I could have supposed. When we left this unfruitful, though lovely, spot, which is perched up several thousand feet above the ordinary level of the earth, we took with us a charming Alpine Idyl.

At times, however, a feeling of despondency would come over me. One evening I asked Lili—

“How ever can you be so patient and so pleased in a poor, desert place like this, stopped just in the very middle of a pleasant journey to lovely, blessed regions?”

“Oh, Otto! I have no difficulty,” she answered, quietly. “Certainly, it is barren and poor here, and many things are wanting; but I know that behind yonder mountain lies a Paradise awaiting for me. But a few days and hours, and I shall be there. This is a true picture of life, is it not, Otto? This world must so often appear to us a poor, desert place, full of wants. But for all that we can be comforted and happy. For we know that on the other side the mountain before us lies an Elysium that awaits us as our own Fatherland; where a place has been prepared for us in a Father’s house, with a brother’s heart, and where they earnestly long after us. There is only a mountain between

us and these blessed regions : it is the Mountain of the Crucifixion. The road passes over it ; then we shall be at home, then we shall be happy !”

A few days later we rested ourselves in an enchanting villa, built on a promontory that jutted out far into the Lago di Maggiore. Lili was sitting by me in the pilastered hall, against whose basement the waves gently rippled, and whence we had a view of surpassing loveliness across the lake to some islands which seemed as if they were floating on its surface. The clearly defined shores on the other side, above which the mountain-tops reared their heads aloft, pile upon pile, appeared as if they were gradually melting away ; while the loftiest and most distant tops and ridges appeared like glittering white clouds, that were on the point of floating away, or of dissolving themselves in the azure blue of Heaven.

We had only recently been in mid-winter, now we were enjoying the most delightful summer weather. Lili was sitting with her lap full of some roses and myrtles she had been gathering. She was buried in deep thought, as she played with the flowers ; now gathering them up and letting them fall, or twining them in and out among one another, and again separating them. She literally

bathed her pretty hands in the fresh flowers. My heart burned. The flowers she was playing with so thoughtlessly were the very ones suited for a bridal wreath. It was all I could do to prevent myself from seizing her little hands, and smothering them with kisses, and yet there was no danger. There was an angel always between her and me.

"What are you thinking of, Lili?" I asked, in an excited tone.

"I was thinking of poor, dark Urserndal on the other side the mountain," she answered, composedly, and my heart began to beat violently; "and as I think of it, everything around me here seems more lovely—yes, ravishingly beautiful. When I feel the magnificence of the present moment, I bless the hours I spent yonder side the mountain. Do you not think, dear Otto, that when once we are up there with God, a like happy feeling will come over us as we think of the dark, regretful days we have spent on earth? I am sure of it. We shall bless them then, in so far as we were patient, and have preserved our hope. For bliss will then only be fully revealed to us when we recall them to mind."

What hallowed, but painful feelings quivered through me at these words of Lili's! It was not remorse alone, but a sincere repentance.

Should I ever come to look back with joy from a higher place on the life I had led on earth? Oh what a life! It must, it must be different.

Need I explain my feelings at these reminiscences, when I look back on my earthly life? But I never came over the mountain Lili spoke of, the Mountain of the Crucifixion. The mountain rather came on me, and beneath its weight I lie crushed, destroyed in Hell.

A tour in Italy, especially to a chivalrous gentleman like myself, is a sore trial of patience. Custom-house officers, porters, hotel keepers, beggars, all the pack that swarm along the highroads and fall upon the traveller like swarms of gad-flies; the cheating; and the swindling that pervades everything; all this was naturally more than I, with the best possible will, could endure. I was very much inclined to thrash my way through Italy, and I felt that I was the man to do so. But that is not a very delightful way of travelling through a beautiful country, to say nothing of breaking a lance for the fair lady of one's heart.

But Lili did not give me any liberty to do so. After having on one occasion terrified her by a violent scene which I bitterly repented afterwards, I submitted myself to her entirely,

and allowed her to control me. I became as tractable as the lion under the fairy's white hand in the fable. Thenceforth it was only necessary for her to lay a hand on my arm, to give me one look, or just speak to me by my name, to quell the most rebellious spirit in my nature.

On the other hand, how admirably she understood to treat these wretched people. Where I only gained curses wherever I came, she reaped blessings.

Her road through the world was, on the whole, wonderfully smooth for her. But she smoothed mine also. I felt that each day I lived with her I was becoming a better man. Yet, perhaps, this too was only an illusion; for an altered person I never became really!

CHAPTER XVI.

“THEIR worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.”

Do you see, I remember even yet something of the religious teaching of my childhood? Terrible words! But it is in Hell only that one realizes their full meaning.

The worm—that is, of course, remorse, which ever finds nourishment in evil recollections; the fire, are the fleshly lusts, for which no longer any fuel can be found.

I have frequently alluded to the gnawing worm in these pages, but have spoken but little of the unquenchable fire. Do you ask, why? Then you must rest contented with the following explanation.

Of the lusts of the flesh it is not well to speak in Hell; they are too repulsive, too unnatural. The least that can be said is that one inwardly loathes oneself. One feels annihilated in these lusts and passions, which are so utterly powerless, so utterly bare; stripped, as it were, not to the skin, not even to the

bones, but to the very heart's core. You will, doubtless, understand me when I simply tell you,—fleshly lusts without flesh must naturally be a torture of Hell.

Yes, it is a fire ; an unquenchable fire. Unquenchable just because there is no matter to feed it. If it depended at all upon matter it would not be unquenchable ; for no matter is eternal.

What more can I say without approaching the subject too closely ? Here in Hell we are without a body ; but it is exactly as if we had one. That is the terrible part of it. This body that does not exist, demands an incessant attention on our parts, a constant stimulus of some kind or another. It will wallow in its wonted enjoyments and debaucheries. It is as craving as ever ; it abates not one tittle of its claims ; and the claim is made upon the poor lost soul, which it can never satisfy. But no refusal is accepted. In the world, it was the body that burned in the flames of lust. Here, it is the body no longer, it is legally excused. It is the soul that burns !

Old folks say—Yes, it is self-evident that we have very old folks in Hell. A thousand, two thousand, three thousand years, is no excessively great age, according to the reckoning of the world. There are people who have

lived under Sardanapalus, Cyrus, Alexander ; there are those who have been cotemporaries of Socrates, Cicero, Horace, Seneca, &c., &c. Yes, possibly some of these persons are themselves present. But I have made it a rule not to particularize any one. There are those who could speak of the fall of Nineveh, the taking of Troy, the destruction of Jerusalem, who have studied the stars with the Chaldæans, watched their flocks with Abraham, assisted at the building of the Pyramids. Yes, there are those who are even of older date than the Deluge. So you see we can study history from its very fountain head. But, unfortunately, everything here is devoid of interest and of usefulness. So we do not make it our study. As far as regards myself there is only one thing that engrosses and occupies my thoughts. I feel an inward longing to meet with some one who has lived with God's Son, the Saviour. But it is altogether fruitless. Certainly, there are those who have much to tell, but they tell of everything except of Him. Either it is a false Messiah, a promoter of rebellions, or a malefactor. In all these voluminous tales there is not a particle of any higher truth, and it is that after which my soul longs. Is it not desperate ?

But I have wandered off from what I was going to say.

Old folks say that it is a remarkable fact, that the atmosphere, especially of late, has become much denser in Hell. We have no "asphyxi-ometer," but I certainly am not overstating the mark, when I say that in the course of about a century nauseousness has increased fifty per cent. It will be a sad look-out if it continue to rise in this proportion! This feeling of nausea, which never ceases, is an indescribable torture. It is exactly as if we must vomit. Naturally it is only a feeling, for otherwise we should vomit up ourselves, and that, of course, is nonsense.

That twaddle was ever on the increase I had already observed when in the world. Clever persons, whom I spoke with about it, said it was owing to people being more and more enlightened. Truly, a very remarkable explanation! But that twaddle increased to such a degree I really had no idea.

Constantly on the increase—what a sorry prospect for the world! Certainly the world cannot exist without it, and, therefore, up to a certain indefinite degree it finds pleasure in it. Many persons' lives are sheer twaddle altogether. But it must get too much at last. It forebodes another deluge; the world seems as if it must sink under twaddle. It is only necessary to go back to the days of our grandfathers!

How simple, comparatively, their manner of life was! People then spoke out their opinions, and were understood. But from one decade to another, they have been getting more and more artificial and abstruse. Stays and statistics have pushed themselves in everywhere to give twaddle a form and a little variety.

Time is ever more and more fruitful in all manner of inventions, but more fruitful still in the most inconceivable circumlocution. Languages are ever being infinitely enriched with new words and modes of speech—the flowers of eloquence—in the interests of twaddle. Phrases and forms have become two of the ruling forces of life. The intellect shrinks up more and more, becomes stunted, cowed; for it becomes of less and less importance; it is twaddle, not genius, that has the upper hand. Truly, twaddle has offered to take genius into its service. But that would be too bad, contrary to all the laws of common sense. Therefore genius says,

“No, rather die first!”

Another observation, too, has recently been made, and not less striking. The number of women that come into the tortures of Hell is wonderfully increased, and like twaddle is ever increasing. This phenomenon has no connection with twaddle. In former days,

and it is only necessary to go back half a century, the number of men in Hell was not so little above that of the women. Now the sexes are pretty nearly equally represented ; but, it is as well to remark that the women have already begun to exceed the men in numbers.

There is a reason for everything, and the reason of this phenomenon cannot be enveloped in doubt to any one who has wandered along through the world with his eyes open. It lies in the modern way of bringing them up. Education is the watchword of the age. But in what does this education for the most part consist, which they so eagerly impart to women ? Is it the education of the heart or of the spirit that is implied ? Are they made acquainted with nature and with history in order that eternity may dawn upon them like the sun, and refract a thousand beams through their hearts ? Are they taught what is great, noble, and beautiful in life, in order that they may become conscious of humanity, and of womanhood ? Are they taught before all things truthfulness and love ; and to feel that they are in God, their Creator, Saviour, and Lord ?

No ! no such thought is ever entertained. By education is understood the making them spell or blunder through two or three

foreign languages, which they seldom learn to any profit. It is a part of their education that they may be able to strum upon some musical instrument or other, and execute some brilliant piece. Further it is a part of their education that they may be able to talk volubly about any topic, though they really know nothing at all about it, in order to show that they are more or less "emancipated," as the expression is. And further it is a part of their education that they dress and conduct themselves according to the fashion. Every fold in their dress is a matter of the last importance, while upon the folds in their hearts but little thought is bestowed.

In short, outside show, and to be able to chatter, are considered to be all in all; a show, by the way, which is not even able to befool anybody. They treat girls like dolls, and not like human beings: their bringing up, their education is from first to last but dollism! Poor, poor women! It is almost a worse treatment than you received even in the most barbarous times. Then people started from the supposition that you had no souls. And for a long while they might say so; but you had a soul for all that. But now they have taken your soul away from you, and that is far, far worse. In truth it is little wonder that women thus rendered vain

from very childhood, should come crowding into Hell in ever-increasing numbers.

In our forefathers' days it was very different. Women then were plainly brought up to fulfil their home duties ; the rest of their education was principally confined to teaching them their Catechism. Even that was something, and not so very little either. Women then had a conscience, and a destined part to fulfil. With pious and single hearts they felt themselves to be in God, and found their greatest joy in performing the duties of their sphere of life, circumscribed though it might be. But now, what is duty ?

One of the clearest interpretations modern days have given of it is, that it is something very wearisome.

And what is to live ? It is to be able to chatter, to trifle away time, to strum upon the piano, to dress, to get a husband, some sweet little children, which in time will grow up, and to have an establishment, to be fêted, to be incomparable, if possible, to the very last hour, and then—one thing is lacking yet, but to that how little heed is paid !—and then to awaken and find themselves in the torments of Hell.

In truth, dear people, your ladies' institutions are a kind of school for Satan. It is bad enough

with men, but with women it is a hundred times worse.

The other day I was sauntering about near the gates of Hell. Do not be misled by the appellation! They are not the real gates of Hell, of course, which bid God and His mercy defiance. These are far deeper down, and belong to a far more terrible kingdom than the kingdom of death. I am alluding, of course, only to the guarded entrance to the place of torment.

I call it the guarded entrance, for though the gates stand wide open, and no sentry is stationed there, yet no one has ever yet succeeded to slip out through them of his own free will; on compulsion, perhaps; but, that is another matter, and then it is not for the best. I do not know, for certain, whether I actually made the attempt, but quite sure is it, that every time I approached a certain, but invisible, boundary, I felt within me an authoritative voice, saying:

"Thus far, but no farther!" None ever go out thence, that is to say, not without ghostly privileges, which means the same thing as a "ticket of leave." Any one, however, can enter in.

I do not recollect any longer how we used to reckon in the world. Was it every minute—no, surely, it was every second—that a soul

was passing away? Well, the greater number enter in at these gates of despair. If one would see Hell in all its naked misery, one must first appear here. On yonder side the gates is a thick, impenetrable, misty darkness, from which fresh shapes are ever emerging. Nay, they literally swarm, now in crowds, now singly *ad infinitum*. All of them are naked. There is none other distinction between them but what is peculiar to sex and age. The beggar and the high-born cannot be distinguished from each other, they are alike bare, equally abject-looking.

Aye! here misery is the common Adam-brand, and it would be useless to try and make its intensity conceivable. It is stamped alike on the countenances, the bearing of the poor wretches, and on the way in which they come. The road to Hell is easy and pleasant at first, but it becomes very arduous at last. Most of them creep along it, in a state of semi-consciousness, in a nervous dread, and know not how they are situated.

It is, indeed, a sight which the world would term *unique*. You who cannot get enough of a sensational or piquant nature in the world, might get your fill here. I, for my part, could not endure it long.

Everything here is matchless, so much the worse, and piquant in the very truest mean.

ing of the word. Everything goes to the heart with a sting; but not two, out of all our numberless pains, are alike. On the present occasion, it seemed just as if everything within me was turned upside down. Perhaps you will say it was only the anguish and smart of self-love. Still, my friend, perhaps not entirely. There was something in that anguish, that smart, which was of a better nature. I could have wept over myself and others.

However strange as it may seem, I had great difficulty in getting away from the place. It was only by cutting the matter very short with myself, that I was able to tear myself away, and then seek in solitude to digest the bitter thoughts which my experience had evoked within.

But solitude was not vouchsafed me, for I soon noticed that I was not alone in this lonely spot. Deep sighs, and a low, wailing moaning, sounded close by me.

Such occurrences are so common in Hell, that one is apt to pay no attention to them. But here I was away from the throng, and it was a single, whining voice I heard. I went a few steps in the direction of the sound, and presently found a wretched, crouching form, the very image of despair and of abject misery. He was an old man, but so abject did he seem, that

there were no signs of reverence about him. His nakedness showed me that he had only recently made his entry into Hell; while the crown that he wore upon his head, cocked as it were on one side, convinced me that I had a king before me. Had I been in the humour, I must have laughed at the sight of his crown, which was dangling all on one side, and seemed in such comical apposition to its original destination, for it was now merely a symbol of the derangement which had seized the poor wretch.

As soon as he saw me, he crawled towards me, embraced my knees, and clung to me, as he exclaimed, in a tremulous voice :

“Are you a human being? Are you a good, compassionate, human being? Oh, then, pity me! Do not leave me! . . . Where am I? . . . Oh! I am perishing from fright and from torment!”

So abject was his condition, that I really felt compassion for him. I could not, therefore, find in my heart to tell him where he was, but expressed the word HELL in as roundabout a way as I could.

For a few moments he remained in deep thought, and then broke out again in a piteous wail :

“Oh, miserable being that I am! Trample me under foot; spit on my beard if you please.

I deserve it! . . . Listen to me. I will confess all my folly and pitifulness to you. . . .

“You perceive, then, that I am a king? I came to the throne at an advanced age, and succeeded to a powerful and flourishing kingdom. But that was not enough! A worm gnawed within me. I could not rest content with simply insuring the happiness of my subjects, I longed to attain a warlike reputation, like the most renowned of my forefathers. In a moment of vanity, I had assumed the title of Emperor. This high-sounding word involved great demands. I must put my foot on the neck of some petty king or other.

“Already I was an old man; there was no time to lose. Till then my conscience was unburdened. I might have closed my eyes in peace and with a sure confidence. But I was fool enough to look away from the thousand blessings I enjoyed. A war, then, I must wage. But I did not dare to wage one with my great and powerful neighbours.

Far down among the mountains dwelt a small, impoverished people. They were a pastoral race. Their king scarce reached up to my knee. Him I selected for my enemy. I was firmly resolved not to grant him peace on any condition. I heaped wrong upon wrong, treachery upon treachery, and violence upon violence; thus at last I got him

to fight a battle in desperation. The blood of thousands was shed ; but of course I won an easy victory. Listen further, and hear to what a pitch I carried my vanity. From first to last it was a monstrous lie, an impudent fabrication ; and, at any rate, in such a contest there could be no honour to gain. But for all that I deceived myself with the idea that I was only acting in accordance with my rights, and was fulfilling my duty towards my fatherland ; that it was a magnanimous, noble exploit I had achieved, an heroic deed from which I could not but reap a lasting reputation.

“ But my laurels cost me dear, though I had thought to win them cheaply. I was able to delude myself to a certain extent, but I could not befooled the world. The whole world despised me in their hearts, though they brayed out their praises of me. So that in reality I had but little enjoyment from my acquired notoriety.

“ But worse was yet in store !

“ Even still all might have been well. I knew God to be a merciful Lord. Had I only awakened to a penitent acknowledgment of my folly and crime, I might have found pardon even for this sin. But I hardened myself against the truth, and to the end of my life continued to hold fast by the de-

lusion that I was a hero in the cause of honour and of right, whose name would be handed down to remotest generations with glory.

“In the midst of this delusion I departed from life; not for the kingdom of Heaven, where a place was already prepared for the pious old man—alas, me! No, not to the kingdom of Heaven! To the very last Satan tempted me, and I went to Hell!

“Yes, only tell me at once, dear stranger! We are in the torments of Hell? Oh, how I detest and despise myself! Fool, wretch that I was! Oh, woe, woe is me!”

And he continued to commiserate himself. I could not do otherwise than allow that he was right. He really had conducted himself not only as a great fool, but, to speak plainly, as a great villain. But here we are villains altogether, in an endless variety. I did not leave him, therefore, till I had helped him to set matters a little straight.

Naturally you inquire, “What king it was? What was his name, his country?”

Yes, indeed, inquisitiveness plays a great part in the world. But when to this I only reply, “he was a king of Abyssinia,” you are perhaps as wise as you were before. For you are, doubtless, not up in the succession of the Abyssinian monarchs, and perhaps have

scarcely ever heard the name of the last king of that country. Perhaps you do not even know that the king of Abyssinia is a Christian.

But with this information you must rest content. I met this king of Abyssinia quite recently. He was dressed then like other decent people in Hell. The crown rested on his head, and he had already begun to form a little court around him. He was evidently in a good way to make himself at home; but I cannot say that his condition was improved. For a crowd of persons, consisting of his own subjects and strangers, whom death had overtaken in the midst of their sins through his crimes, followed him wherever he went with wild and bitter curses. He was like a hunted wild beast, and could not escape out of the way; for he trembled with fear, and his crown weighed him down to the ground.

So speedily and so entirely are the conditions of existence altered, when a person does not care to see where he is walking, or what he is doing.

He sinks into the grave, and the grave is a bottomless pit to all whom God's mercy does not hold up; its bottom is only first to be found in Hell.

This king had been taken in the very midst of the intoxication of victory; now his intoxi-

cation is passed, and is succeeded by that utter prostration of mind and body—the usual accompaniments of intemperance—which prevails in an extreme degree in Hell.

He, too, had aspired to the title of the Great. Oh, how piteously small he is now; how small he tries to make himself in order to avoid his persecutors! At chance times he may succeed in doing so; but he will never be able to escape from himself. And, oh! the contempt he feels for himself is alone a greater torture than they underwent whom he so thoughtlessly sent headlong to death.

How rich in enjoyment is that earthly life when properly viewed. From Hell we can see it to be so with terrible clearness. And, I must confess, my life has been one of those that have been most richly endowed. How many happy, I am almost tempted to say blessed, moments, have I not experienced.

Not unfrequently a bell sounds in my ears. It rings and rings; its vibrating clang pierces my heart. It is the vesper bell, which I listened to so often in the world with feelings of delight.

At the first sound, straightway a rustic landscape unfolds itself to my gaze, with all the enchantment which memory alone can impart. Either it is at home among the rich

corn-fields, by wood or by lake ; or amid the lofty mountains, whose glittering summits are bathed in the evening glow. The sun has just set, but it has left a glow behind it, which is ever shifting overhead in a blaze of purple or of gold. Gradually all has become hushed. Nature sinks deeper and deeper into a hallowed repose. And that it is a hallowed repose, the vesper bell from the village church proclaims.

The day's work is over ; everything is making ready to rest. Those who are united in love will soon be assembled together. In the cottage, the mother is gathering her children around her, awaiting the arrival of her husband ; and then, when he does come, the door is closed, and all the moil, vexations, and troubles of life are left outside. Perhaps a little grief lurks within, but it is forfeited to love. It serves but to nourish affection, and affection must subsist.

Oh that I was but the poor labourer returning homewards from the fields with the wearied team ; or the ragged urchin that saunters along behind the cattle.

But the vesper bell says, "It is too late."—Yes, yes, it is too late !

What are my longings but the noose in which the despairing one hangs himself ?

CHAPTER XVII.

I REVERT once more to my childhood.

It was the evening before my aunt's birthday. My present had long been in readiness; and, with a restless feeling, I brooded over it, divided, childlike, between two opposite desires. Of course the nature of my present was to be kept a profound secret from her; but, on the other hand, I was very anxious that she should have some suspicion of the surprise that was in store for her. A prey to these irreconcilable emotions, I stole down to her room.

She was not there. It was very vexatious; I must wait for her. To pass away the time I let my eyes wander round the room. Everything was in its customary place, and there was literally nothing to attract my attention. I could not help indulging in a hearty yawn. But what was that? A lovely butterfly on the window pane! In a moment I was all life. Forgetting the good advice I had received about always letting small animals be at peace, I commenced an exciting chase.

Before long I had the butterfly between my fingers. It fluttered wildly with its wings, but that was of no avail. I held it fast, and examined it in the most scrutinizing way. Presently I heard footsteps; it was my aunt! So, in great confusion, I closed my hand upon it, and turned very hot and red in the face.

My aunt entered the room with her accustomed sprightliness, and at once gave up herself to me. But I was ill at ease, and stood like a blockhead before her, without being able to get a word out. So at last she had recourse, as usual, when she wanted to enliven me, to a story. I was so fond of stories, and Aunt Betty told them so capitally. Perhaps a severer criticism than mine might have pronounced them to be of little import. She used to invent most of them as she went on. And in this her great peculiarity consisted; she was inexhaustible. However trifling or simple her tale might be, it was never without a suitable ending, and a moral that seldom failed to make an impression on me.

The moral of this evening's story was—God sees all things.

It had a great effect on me; involuntarily I hid my closed hand behind my back. My heart began to beat high. I felt uncomfortable.

“Do you see, my dear boy,” she continued,

“ God sits upon his lofty throne, with an angel on either side, and they each of them have a tablet in their hands. God sees everything, and will forget nothing. The angel on His right marks down all the good that man is able to do here on earth, and he smiles ; oh, so very sweetly ! But the angel on the left marks down all the evil, and the tears run down his cheeks, so that the writing on the tablet is ever being rubbed out, and has incessantly to be renewed. So when the last day comes, and men shall render an account of their doings in the presence of God, then will God call out in a voice of thunder, ‘ Bring forth the tablets.’ And then it will depend on how the account stands. Have we done more evil than good, without having repented and obtained forgiveness for our sins, then may God have mercy upon us !—We shall be for ever miserable !”

This ending to the story made a terrible impression upon me. I clenched my hand so firmly, so firmly together ! It was just as if there were hot ashes within it ; but it was my naughty conscience that burned. The butterfly must long have been dead, but I fancied I could still feel it fluttering, and that it would force my hands open. God sees all things, and one day we should have to give an account of

everything. I could endure it no longer. I burst out into a violent flood of tears; and, without being able to utter a single word, held out my hand with the dead butterfly in it.

Aunt understood it all in a moment. She drew me towards her, and addressed me first with some gently reproachful words. Thereupon she pointed out to me that God would forgive me my sin, according as I repented and was sorry for it. But it was long before she could stop my sobs, I was so frightened, and so very grieved with myself. Never have I known anything so comforting as the tenderness displayed in my aunt's character. Then she made me fold my hands, that I might pray God to forgive me. I was deeply moved; truer worship was never offered.

But my aunt had not finished yet. It was a new story, and it must have a suitable ending, and a moral. She pressed me to her bosom, and gently urged me that,

"I should act thus my whole life through. As soon as ever I felt within myself that I had done anything wrong, I should at once go with a penitent heart and beseech God to forgive me, and promise Him never to do so more. Then the dear God would let mercy go before judgment, and I should have no need to dread the black tablet."

At last, in silent sorrow, we buried the dead butterfly in a flower-pot. We covered up its grave with rose leaves, as well as its tiny body, to prevent the dark black mould from touching it.

With a lightened heart I left my aunt. But I passed a very uneasy night, and was haunted by the wildest dreams. Again and again the terrible words rang in my ears. "Bring forth the tablets!" When I awoke it was quite dark. Hitherto I had never known what it was to be afraid of the dark; but I knew it now.

Early next morning I went to my aunt's room with my present. Contrary to custom, the door was closed; but it was immediately opened to me when I told her who it was. I was disagreeably surprised, when standing in the doorway, to see that my dear Aunt Betty was weeping in silence. Spread out before her was a row of all manner of small articles of the most varied and wonderful description. She beckoned me to approach, and embraced and kissed me in silence. I was so startled and grieved, that I quite forgot the precious present I held in my hand. The thought occurred to me, whether she, too, had crushed a butterfly to death. But it was soon diverted into another channel.

“Aunt!” I exclaimed, “did you not say yesterday evening that God sees everything? Does he then not see that you are crying?”

Aunt Betty looked up with a puzzled air. Suddenly it seemed as if a sunbeam was playing over her gentle features.

“Yes! surely He does! my sweet child,” she answered, as she passionately but tenderly pressed me to her bosom; “and I am a great stupid ever to forget it, and to be grieved. He not only sees, but counts my tears!”

And she quickly dried her eyes, and looked up with a smiling face. “Can you see, my boy, how God has dried them all up in a trice? He only has to breathe upon the eye, and they are gone!”

“But why were you crying, dear aunt?”

“You would not understand, my child! To-day I am an old maid of forty years. But it is so silly to cry. Let me only be an old miss of sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, I shall not trouble over it a bit, if it be God’s will. But come now, and sit by me. I have a little story to tell you.”

I seated myself close by her side, and she threw her arm around me, and began as follows :

“It is long since, dear Otto, but there was once a young and pretty girl, who was just as

silly as she was pretty, for she thought the world was so delightfully beautiful, and that all its joys and happiness were in store for her. There was nothing really wicked in this, my boy ; but it was a dangerous, false delusion. But she thought the world was so lovely. That she was very pretty is quite certain ; but when any one told her so, she would bow her head, and cast her eyes down, as if she would sink into the earth.

“And there was one who was constantly telling her so. Oh, how handsome he was ! How strong and brave ! It was war time. He was the captain of a privateer, a regular desperado, they said.

“And he became dearer and dearer to her. Do you know what a ball is, my dear ; I mean a regular, brilliant ball ? It is a wonderful thing, half angelic, half devilish. One is carried away as in a whirlwind, and held up suspended between Heaven and Hell. Enough, that when it was over, he besought her earnestly to give him one of her gloves. I think, indeed, at this moment she would not have denied him anything. He got it ; and here you see the fellow to it. It is the plain truth I am telling you.”

And she showed me number one of her wonderful collection. It was an old kid glove.

“But the young girl’s family said that he

was an adventurer and a rake, whom no honourable girl could have anything to do with. It was sad news for her! But he had, as it were, taken her soul from her; she loved him so dearly! And so at last they were betrothed. Here you have the ring. He wore it once on his right hand.

"She was happy now. There was only one voice in the world that had entrance to her heart, and that was his. Likely enough he had many and great faults; but that was of little import to her; she loved him just as he was. Had he been an outcast among men, I think she would all the same have held fast to him. When one has once given away one's heart—but of course you understand nothing about that.

"Well, he went out and returned home again. It was a noble ship he commanded. It was called the *Viking*. Here it is!

"He brought home one prize after another, and they yielded large sums of money. But it was said that he made away with it all, and that he was a dissipated man, who played ducks and drakes with everything."

And aunt showed me an exquisite little picture, representing a schooner at sea in full sail.

"Often he was away for a very long time. But they wrote to one another as well as they

could. Oh, what letters! She put her whole soul in them. And he—

“Here you see the letters he wrote to the young girl.”

And she showed me a little packet of faded letters, carefully bound round with a faded ribbon.

“At length she heard no more from him. Oh, what she suffered during this sorrowful time! A letter did come at last. He lay ill, very ill, in a seaport town of some foreign land. Winter was coming on; but she did not shrink back for that. Taking a girl with her, she journeyed a long distance over land, and found him in a piteous state. He had fought a duel, and had been wounded. You do not know what that means, and it is not necessary that you should; but it really occurred.

“This is the bullet!

“She nursed him, and he recovered. She set him at liberty, and paid his debts. It was nothing, nothing at all! Full of penitence, he returned home with her an altered man. The explanation he gave satisfied even her family. He would not go privateering any more. It was arranged that he should command a large merchant vessel belonging to her brother, and that she should accompany him as his wife.

“Only once more were they to be separated,

never to be parted again. He had to visit his family, and arrange his affairs.

“Time passed on; the wedding-day was approaching. Happy day that was to crown all her hopes, and repay her for all her pains. The bridal dress was laid out in readiness. Here you see the bridal wreath! Do you know the myrtle? It only bears touching once a-year, and each year two leaves drop off. But it will last as long as there are eyes to look at it.

“Then a letter came. At the very last station he had turned back, never to return again. Here is the sorrowful letter, blotched all over with her tears! Oh, what it cost her to answer it!

“Was he, then, wicked? No; only fickle! He had got entangled in a web of thoughtless engagements, from which he could not extricate himself. His uncle, whose heir he was, had a daughter. God bless her! He had plighted his faith on two sides. Men do such things, and not so unfrequently. But, of course, he could only keep it on one side. He fulfilled his duty towards her who perhaps had suffered the most through him, and who—but it is not worth dwelling upon. Enough to say that he became a steady and honest man, and has, I hope, obtained pardon for the sins of his youth.

“But she who had cheerfully given up everything for him could never settle to anything; and with beauty, happiness, future prospects, it was all over. By degrees she became old and ugly, and lived only for the little good she was able to show to others. For though it be an evil world, all people are not evil, but many of them are unfortunate, and require a little aid, poor things! In a word, my love, God was her comfort!”

Thus aunt ended her story, and thereupon began to pack up her treasures very carefully.

When she had done she said, “So, now it is all over. It is time to be thinking about dinner.”

Of course I did not understand a word of it, neither was it necessary that I should. The old maid had longed to relieve her heart to a human being; but she would not let out her secret.

Now I remember every single word, and understand it perfectly; both the story itself, and what she felt at that hour, and how heavy her heart must have felt on her fortieth birthday since she lightened it to me, a little ignorant child.

At the dinner-table Aunt Betty was exceedingly merry. She made speeches at which everybody laughed; and she was brimming over with witty remarks for the rest of the day.

But those words—"God sees everything"—often returned to my recollection, even at a riper age. It was, however, more the dread than the comfort contained in them that made the impression upon me. So different was I to my good, pious aunt. But the time soon came when it was in my power to throw these terribly ominous words to the winds. And soon the time came when I crushed one butterfly after the other to death without feeling any great prickings of conscience.

It must certainly have been the case that some time or other you gave up a whole or half a day to looking through, sorting, or destroying old letters and papers. Then you shut to the door in order not to be disturbed; you made yourself comfortable, lighted your cigar, and set to work.

It was not any hard work; but still you must allow that you became rather red in the face, and that at the expiration of a few hours you felt yourself wonderfully exhausted and spent. What was it that thus excited you, made you so uneasy in spirit, and taxed your strength? It was not the labour, for that was nothing. No; it was the recollections, which came streaming in upon you one after the other. And yet, perhaps, the greater number

of them were pleasant ones ; aye, more than pleasant, rich in joy, precious.

After this you will be able to form a faint idea of what in one respect we have to suffer here. Recollections come crowding in, and most of them sorrowful, because they are evil. They come without any cause, spontaneously, and without any limitation. It is not a few reminiscences here and there, that by chance get furbished up ; but all the recollections of a whole life, which perforce press themselves in. We may leave the good ones out of the reckoning, though these, too, can inflict sorrow, regret, and pain. But the evil ones ! Their name is Legion ! And each of them presses forward with its claim. There is no sin so little, or so mean, during the whole career of our lives, that does not step forward and raise its accusing voice. For justice is the very groundwork of existence ; though here it first becomes manifest.

And you must not think only of evil or of heedless actions ; every evil or thoughtless word we have spoken, yes, every thought, has the same fearful claim upon us. Like the Parthian horsemen they swarm round us in triple columns, each striking a blow in turn, or discharging a poisoned shaft, and again withdrawing to make room for others. Ah ! the comparison fails ; so much the worse !

Some of these evil recollections never cease after the first gash, but become incorporated, as it were, into the bleeding heart.

Can you realize the nature and the extent of this suffering? Do you realize to what a degree we must feel ourselves exhausted by the numbers, and by the strength of these recollections? And there is no cessation, no alleviation! For though the suffering be not always equally intense, yet there can be no mention made of alleviation in Hell.

Oh, these recollections! this remorse! I am daily tempted to say that they are unendurable; but still we endure them. And most terrible of all is it when they break out suddenly upon us from an ambush and pierce a dagger into the heart. What has been forgotten for twenty, thirty, or even for a greater number of years, suddenly stands out as plain as life before one, as if it had risen up from the dead. Yes, it is exactly as if the grave opened itself. Every wrong thing that we have done in our lifetime, from the greatest to the least, comes forth.

Oh, my friend! impress this upon yourself, and upon all you love, that "it is useless, useless to forget!"

But I must not quite discard the orderly and decorous social life we seek to live here.

Even the most experienced may at times break out, and I should be constantly breaking out if I did not lay a strong check on my restless spirit.

One of the great ruling tendencies in the world is to pass the time away, and for that ten thousand and the most incredible means have been invented. Whether ungodliness or foolishness is the most prominent in this, it is not easy to decide.

There are few words that so exactly describe the world's perversion as this—Pastime.

Time is synonymous with life; one must live, and thus one beguiles the time; yes, that is just why one does it. It is time that through joy and sorrow gradually develops the fullness of existence both within and without; and however full of ambition one may be, it must be beguiled. Yes, it must be beguiled, and that is called to live; and after time comes death, which only waits for it to come to an end. Pastime thus becomes an endless and ridiculous attempt at suicide. One beguiles the time as if it were some frightful monster, an enemy to life and happiness; but the monster first appears when time is no more.

All the treasures of Golconda cannot weigh against the contents of a single day, aye, nor of a single hour. Each hour, as it were, brims over with blessings. Of what value

then must time be in its full and free extent? Its measure is only to be found in Heaven, where the Love which created it sits enthroned.

Here in Hell we have emerged from all such misty clouds, and also from that which the world calls pastime. The naked truth and reality surround us on all sides. In time all the fullness of life, and all the blessings love could devise, were offered to us with a Father's hand. But we behaved as you do; we trod understanding under foot; we passed away the time, and knew not what we did. Now it is past—quite past—and all hope has gone with it. But we, too, are past—quite past—doomed to Hell, out of the pale of existence, never more to return.

In the world the theatre was one of our principal sources of amusement wherewith to beguile the time. We, too, have our theatre here, though there is no longer any time to beguile. It is only an old custom that makes it necessary to us. Here, too, women must have something to rave about, and men something to go mad with admiration for; women and men together, something to talk and converse about. Weather with us is no object; the more necessary, therefore, is a theatre.

Our theatre is after a peculiar style, and on a grand scale, to which the world, even that world in the world—I mean Paris—cannot

produce an equal. The *répertoire*, so far as it depends upon poetical composition, is certainly rather poor. It is but seldom that a piece in the world is vulgar enough to come down here ; frivolity, insipidity, and emptiness are the prevailing fashion, and that naturally cannot yield a large return. But we have a way of our own of providing the stage with pieces, and it will, doubtless, be acknowledged that theatrical effect in the world is like water when compared with what it is here.

With the exception of a few pieces handed down to us from the world our *répertoire* consists of actual occurrences. And not only that, but our actors, too, are the very persons connected with those occurrences. They merely repeat on the stage what they have enacted in the world. There is no illusion here, therefore ; ideally, a complete reality is offered. What is represented has actually taken place, and been enacted by these very actors.

We have theatre directors in abundance. In the world it was a very troublesome post, an endless source of annoyance. How often has it not been termed a regular Hell ? But it is here that directors first begin to realize the Hell. They have to vie with each other, and strain every nerve in order to bring something on the stage that is interesting, exciting, dreadful, or touching. Yes, strange enough, we,

too, must be moved, but, unfortunately, cannot be. First, a hunt must be made after something that has occurred (aliàs a drama). Next, the persons connected with this drama must be ferreted out, and they are often dispersed over all parts of Hell. But when found they must obey orders at once, and act their proper parts. Yet it is difficult to find them out and collect them together.

Perhaps an example will best illustrate my meaning.

A play was lately performed, entitled "The Jewels." It is a tale of seduction, accompanied by murder and robbery, and is composed with diabolical ingenuity. A pretty, good, but simple-hearted woman, was seduced; but her seduction was merely the means to the object, not the object itself. That was neither more nor less than a robbery of jewels, in the perpetration of which two cruel murders were requisite. It is really a powerful piece; though, in a sense, quite different to that in which the word is used in the world; because here there is no invention in it; in all its parts, down to the very minutest details, it is real fact. I can even still remember reading the horrible case in the papers; the sensation it created was enormous. They are the very same persons who perform the parts here; villains, of course, all of them. The virtuous

characters naturally, in a great measure, are not under the director's command.

The immense advantage of this is readily perceptible. We have real murderers, real cheats, rascals and villains, real seducers, &c., &c., and everything has really been enacted as represented on the stage.

The real characters perform their parts under compulsion, and under inconceivable suffering, but with a literal truthfulness. To fill up the parts of the virtuous characters, in default of better, they use accomplished hypocrites, of which there is never any lack, and which have very great pleasure in availing themselves of the opportunity of displaying their talents. These parts, too, are represented in the most perfect manner.

It is a natural consequence, that in all these pieces no worldly code of morals is followed; we are far beyond that sort of thing. The good is far from always triumphing; and, on the other hand, it is not always the evil. It takes what course it can, or rather the very course it once followed.

Meanwhile, again I must say strange enough, those pieces in which right and justice triumph produce an infinitely greater effect than those where evil predominates. These are made a subject of scorn and contempt.

The scenery—of course there can be no talk

about decorations—is not to be surpassed. I am, of course, only speaking of an illusion, but the illusion is perfect. We are able to reproduce any spot or locality, only of course as a shadow; but still the resemblance is perfect. It appears to the very life; true and real. Sometimes the pictures produce an indescribable effect. Many a soul is well nigh driven mad at the sight of the well-known spot, and conducts himself like one beside himself with pain, longing, and regret.

On the whole, it is evident that these representations produce a very striking impression. But there is nothing satisfying in them; on the contrary, the pain is intense, equally so to actors as to spectators. But in this respect as in all others, there is an implacable law. It is no longer the law of Liberty, as in the world; it is the law of Necessity.

We must! It is one word too much, and there all discussion ends.

